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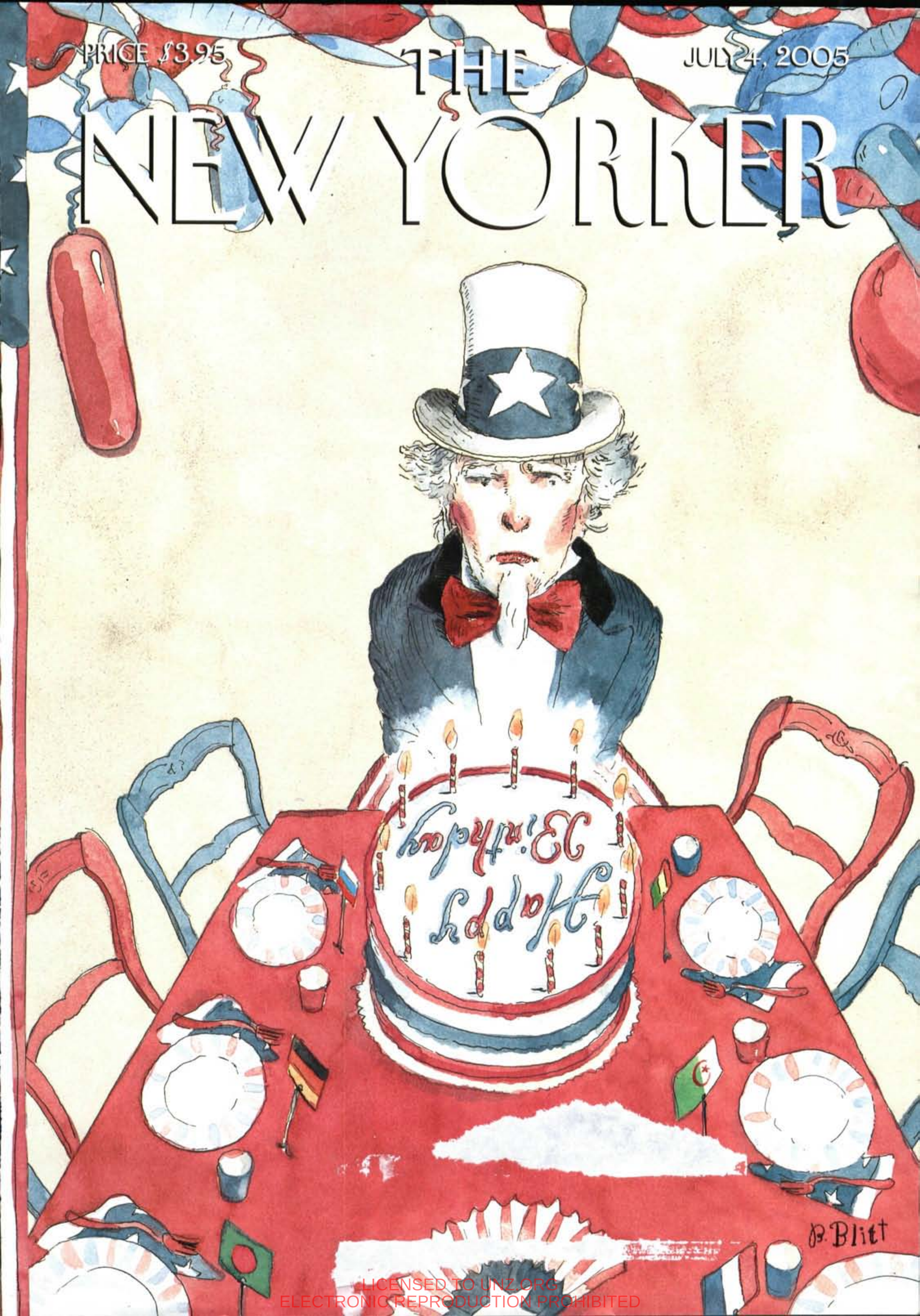
JULY 4, 2005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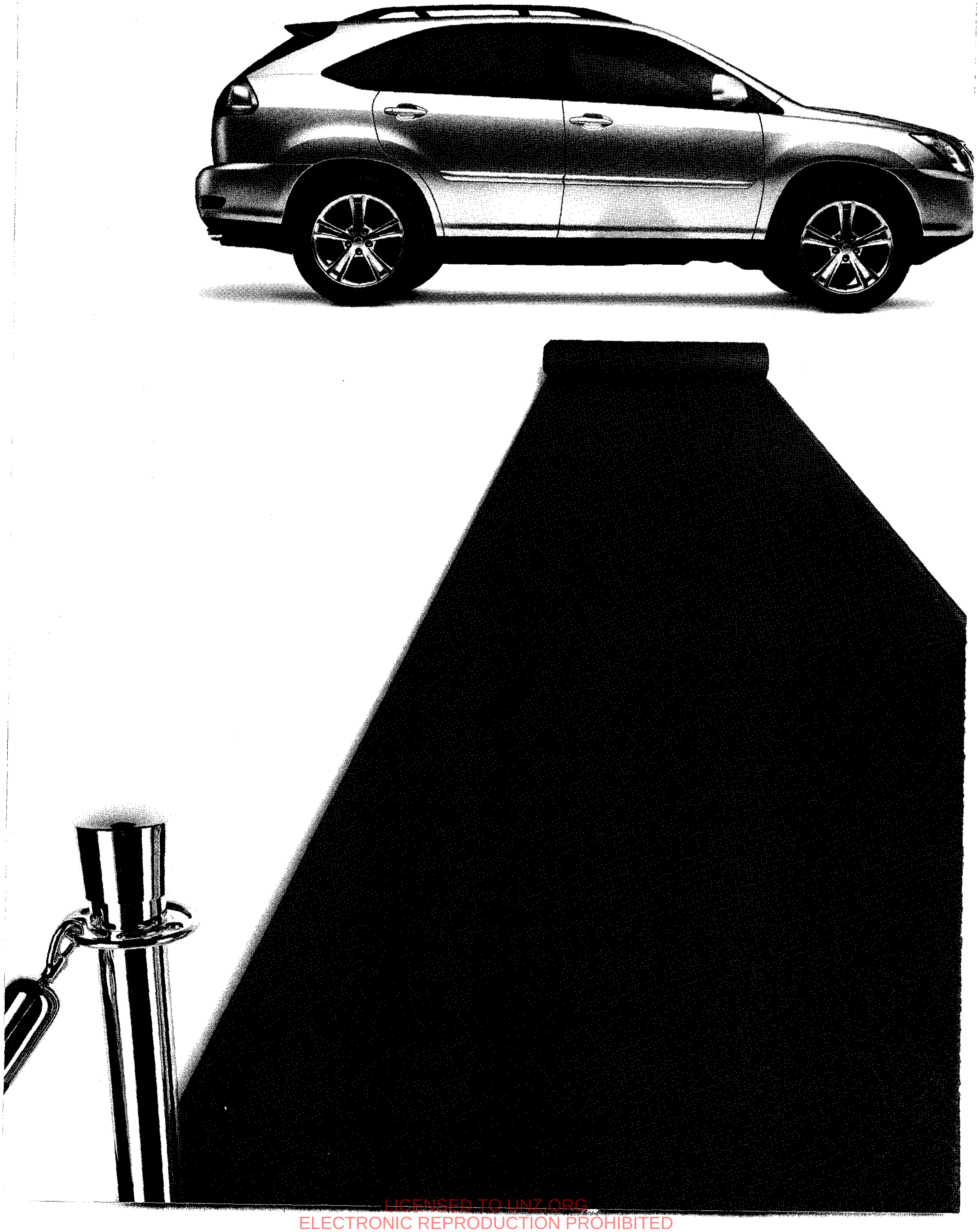

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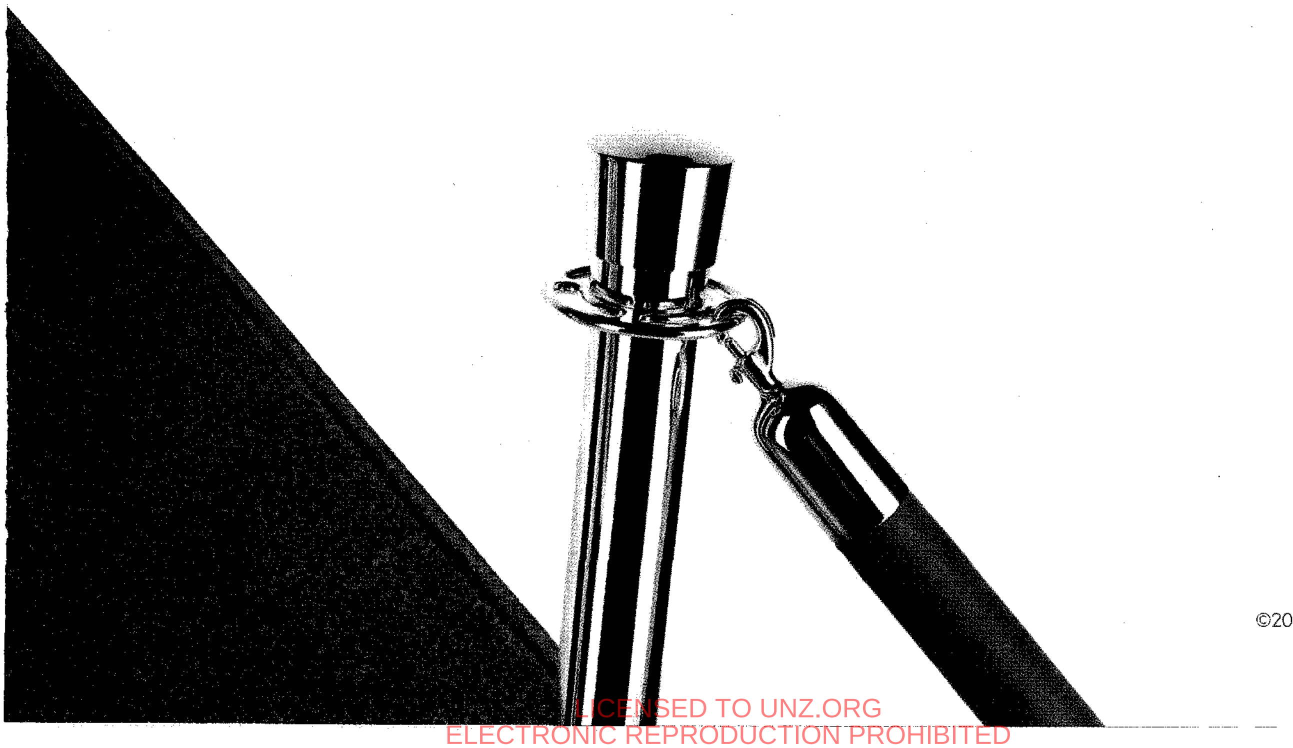

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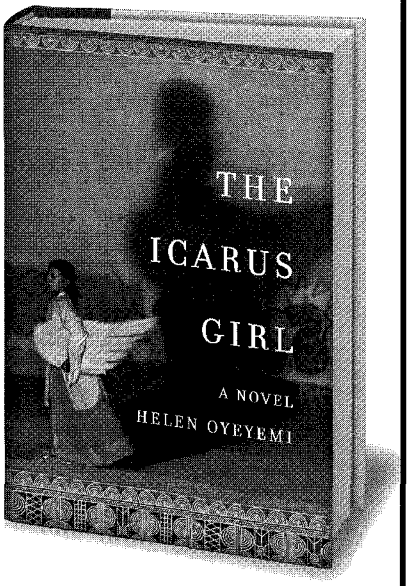

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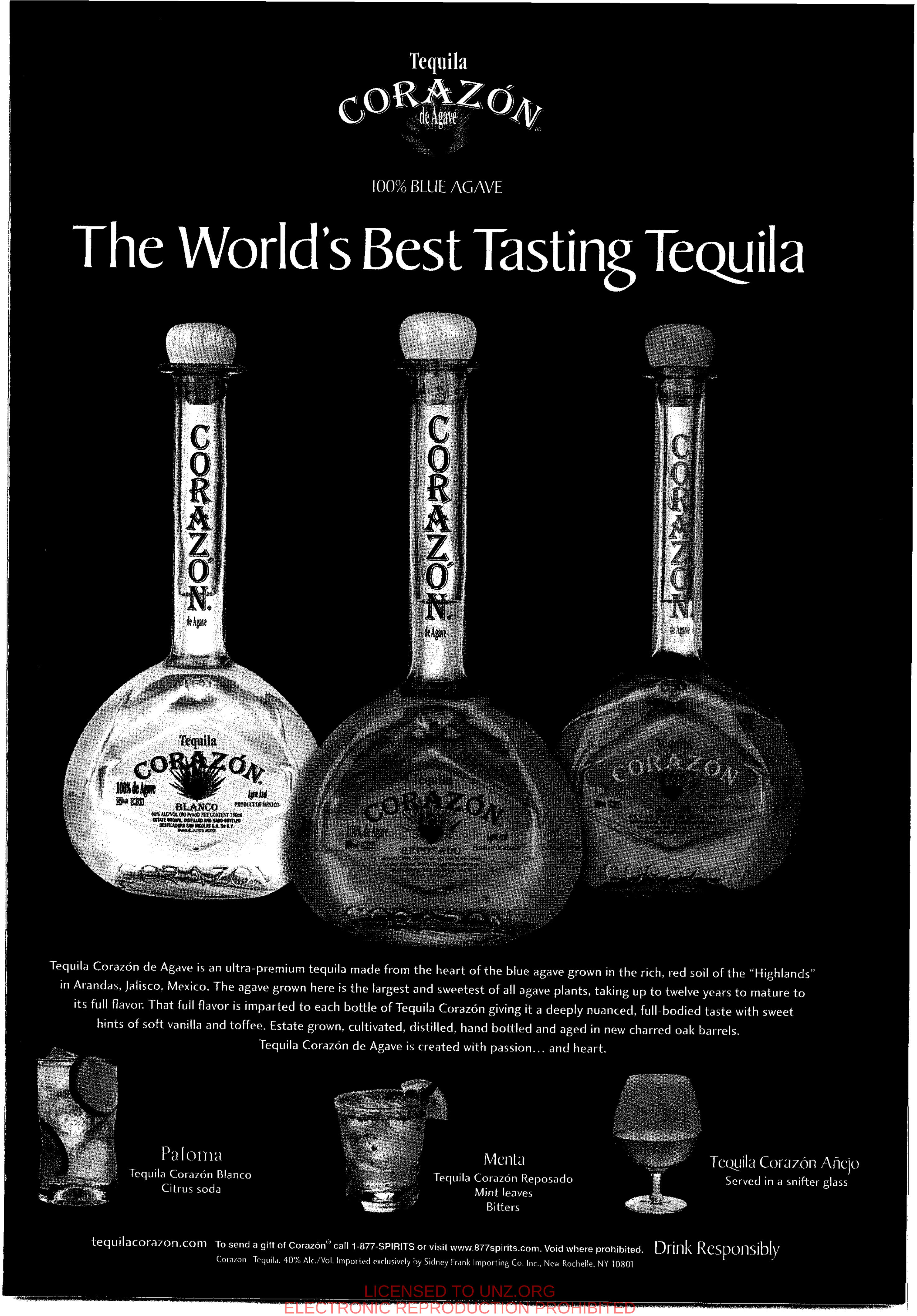

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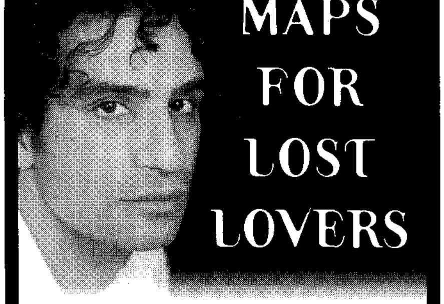

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CONTRIBUTORS

Jeffrey Goldberg ("Real Insiders," p. 34) writes the Letter from Washington.

Brenda Shaughnessy (Poem, p. 36) is the author of "Interior with Sudden Joy," a collection of poems.

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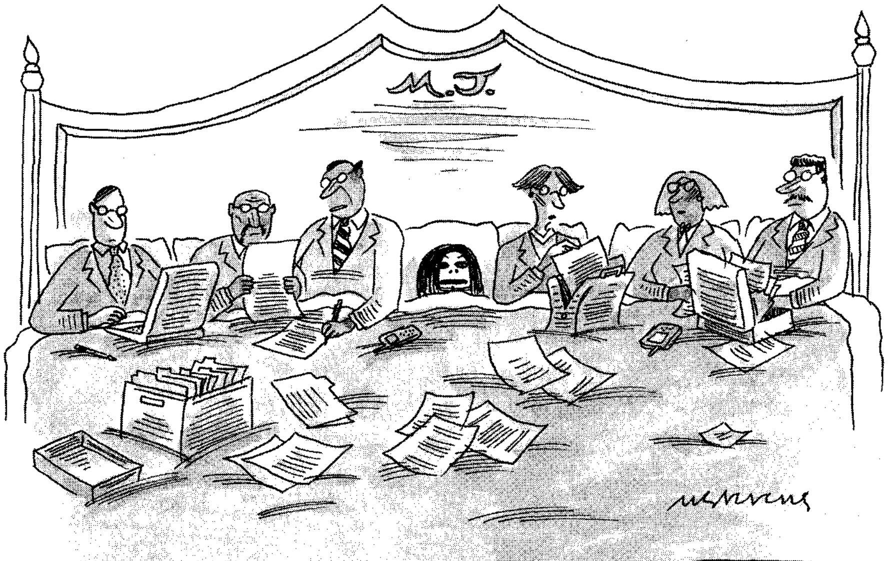
Judith Thurman ("The Misfit," p. 60) has been writing for the magazine since 1987.

Cristina Henríquez (Fiction, p. 68) will publish her first collection of short stories, "Come Together, Fall Apart," next spring.

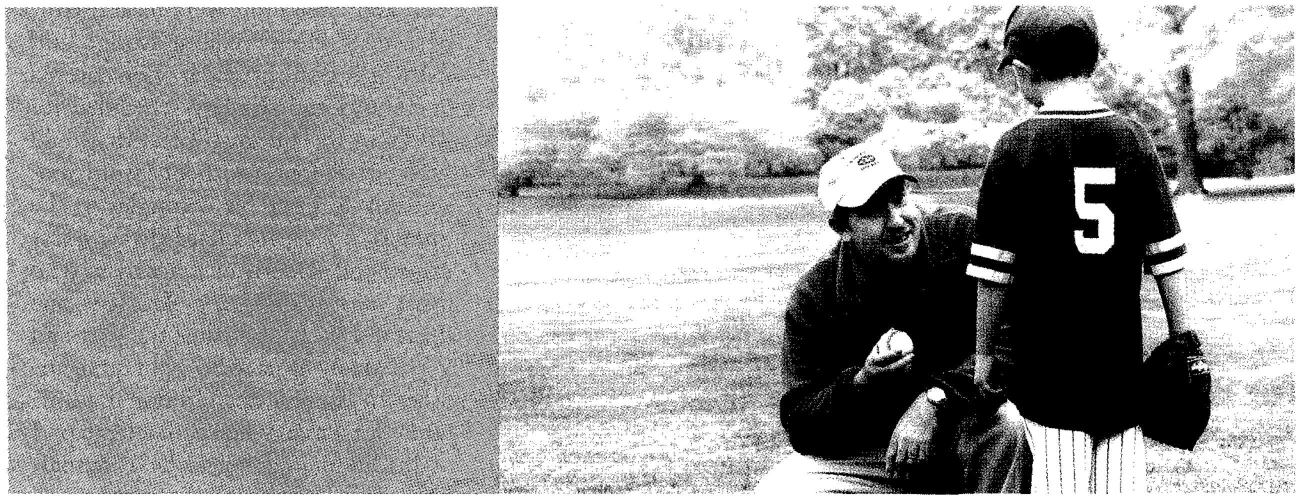
Anthony Lane (A Critic at Large, p. 74) is the author of "Nobody's Perfect: Writings from *The New Yorker*," which is available in paperback.

Nancy Franklin (On Television, p. 82) is the magazine's television critic.

Barry Blitt (Cover) has done the illustrations for a children's book entitled "Once Upon a Time, the End," which will be published in November. ♦



MICHAEL JACKSON'S NEW LIFE STYLE



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THE SAIGON SPY

Thomas A. Bass's profile of Pham Xuan An, the *Time* journalist who also spied for North Vietnam, includes an interview with Frank McCulloch, An's boss at *Time's* Saigon bureau ("The Spy Who Loved Us," May 23rd). Bass writes, "McCulloch remembers An with tremendous fondness and respect, and he says it was a 'great pleasure,' in 1990, to organize a subscription fund, which raised thirty-two thousand dollars, to send An's eldest son . . . to journalism school at the University of North Carolina. The list of subscribers to the fund reads like a Who's Who of Vietnam War reporters." It's easy to imagine the reaction this provokes among those of us who served in Vietnam and lost comrades there, friends whose families often faced serious financial difficulties after their deaths. Anyone who wonders why active-duty military personnel and veterans distrust the mainstream media need only read those two sentences.

David Clayton Carrad
Augusta, Ga.

I was a correspondent for *Time* in Vietnam, and I knew Pham Xuan An for nearly ten years. While spying for the North Vietnamese, An transformed *Time's* correspondents into an inadvertent worldwide network of spies for Hanoi. *Time* had high-level sources who often provided classified information on the condition that it would be kept secret and used only as background. The content of these confidential briefings was circulated internally in the weekly "*Time* memo," which was considered so sensitive that copies were numbered and returned after a reading by the editors. The memo contained much useless gossip, but also solid-gold insider reports from the White House, the State Department, and the Pentagon. The memo was also circulated to *Time* bureaus around the world, which were supposed to take equal precautions; An, as a *Time* reporter, had access to it. I often saw him taking notes from the Saigon bureau chief's confidential reports. These would have included briefings by Generals William Westmoreland and Creighton Abrams and Ambassadors Henry Cabot Lodge and Ellsworth Bunker, which often covered operations and strategy scheduled for weeks in the future. Then An would suddenly disappear without a word, presumably to brief his comrades in the tunnels of Cu Chi. I have always questioned the American journalists who insist on romanticizing An. It is one thing to have been against the Vietnam War—many of us were—but quite another to express unconditional admiration for a man who spent a large part of his life pretending to be a journalist while helping to kill Americans.

Zalin Grant
Paris, France

THE MUMMY RETURNS

I was struck by the photo accompanying Kevin Krajick's article on the paleopathologist and mummy expert Arthur Aufderheide, of a crouching Peruvian mummy, now in a museum in Quito, Ecuador ("The Mummy Doctor," May 16th). When, in the eighteen-eighties, a similar mummy, also in a fetal position, was exhibited at the Trocadero in Paris, it had a powerful influence on several modern artists, including Paul Gauguin. In Gauguin's late masterpiece "Where Do We Come From? What Are We? Where Are We Going?," the figure on the far left was directly inspired by his encounter with the mummy, which came to represent the theme of vanitas and morbidity in his works.

Laura Morowitz
Associate Professor of Art History
Wagner College
Staten Island, N.Y.

•

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Quebec's Cirque Éloize, at the New Victory Theatre. Photograph by Sylvia Plachy.

GOINGS ON ABOUT TOWN

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THIS WEEK

THE THEATRE
EXITS AND ENTRANCES

"As You Like It" isn't one of Shakespeare's universally beloved works; through the centuries, it has been disparaged by such critics as Johnson, Shaw, and Tolstoy. Still, it does contain one of the Bard's most famous soliloquies ("All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players"). Starting this week, the Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park offers a production of the comedy that stars Brian Bedford, Richard Thomas, and Lynn Collins. (See page 12.)

NIGHT LIFE
CHIP TAYLOR

The brother of the actor Jon Voight, Taylor has penned some of the best-known songs of the rock era, including "Wild Thing" and "Angel of the Morning." In recent years, he has teamed with the vocalist and fiddler Carrie Rodriguez; the duo performs as part of Celebrate Brooklyn! this week. (See page 15.)

ART
AT THE DAHESH

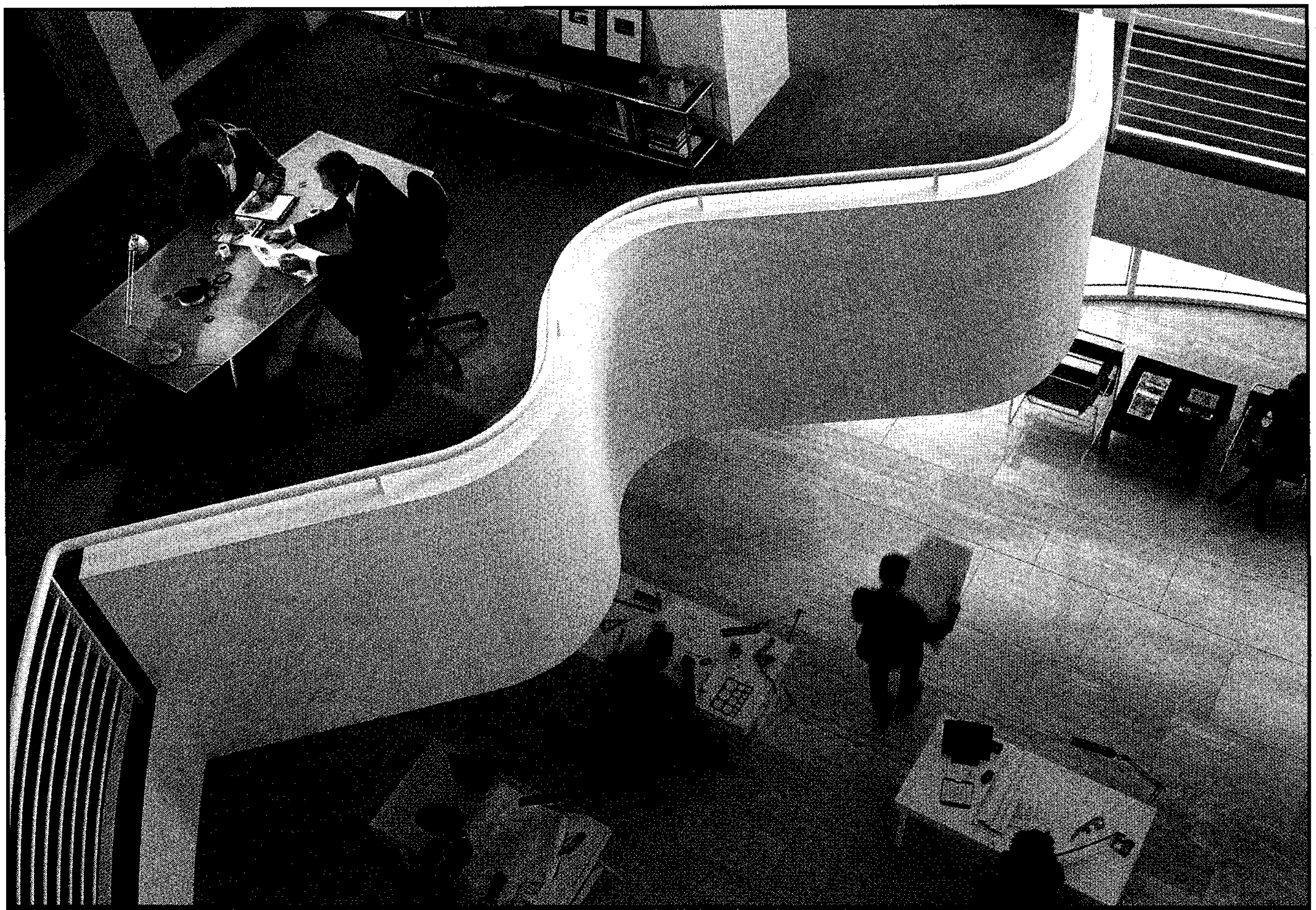
The Dahesh Museum of Art, the only U.S. museum devoted entirely to academic art from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, celebrates its tenth anniversary with works from its permanent collection, the core of which was brought out of Beirut during the 1975 civil war. (See page 18.)

READINGS AND TALKS
SEDARIS AND FRIENDS

Earlier this year, the humorist David Sedaris edited "Children Playing Before a Statue of Hercules," an anthology of short stories by Alice Munro, Charles Baxter, Lorrie Moore, and others that benefits the Brooklyn-based volunteer organization 826NYC. Many of these authors will join Sedaris and his co-host, Sarah Vowell, for a reading at the Great Hall at Cooper Union on July 5 at 8. (See page 27.)

ABOVE AND BEYOND
MAKING AN OFFER

Christie's sells off the contents of Marlon Brando's Los Angeles home; items include the actor's childhood yearbooks, his working script for "The Godfather," and a handwritten letter from Mario Puzo urging him to take the role of Don Corleone. (See page 27.)



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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
HOT SUMMER NIGHTS

After the hoopla of the Tony Awards and before the frenzy of August's New York International Fringe Festival comes the season when small, new plays get a shot at the spotlight. One of the best off-season series is the Soho Think Tank's Ice Factory festival, now in its twelfth year, which has a fine record for presenting intellectually challenging and artistically daring fare. This year, look for new work by the Foundry Theatre, SaBooge Theatre, and the Riot Group, among others. The Downtown Urban Theatre Festival, at the Cherry Lane Theatre, now in its fourth season, has a new play by Reg E. Gaines, "Murphy's Law," this summer. Second Stage's younger sibling uptown features "Swimming in the Shallows," a relationship drama set in an aquarium. And the Midtown International Theatre Festival, starting July 18, offers forty shows that range from a musical about Princess Diana to a drama about Caligula. This diversity—in casting, subject matter, direction—reminds us that theatre is a living art that reflects something of us all.

ANDY FRIEDMAN

—*Hilton Als*

THE THEATRE
OPENINGS AND PREVIEWS

Please call the phone number listed with the theatre for timetables and ticket information.

AS YOU LIKE IT
The Public Theatre's Shakespeare in the Park season begins with a production of the comedy, directed by Mark Lamos, starring Brian Bedford, Richard Thomas, James Waterston, Lynn Collins, and Jennifer Ikeda. In previews. (Delacorte Theatre, Central Park near W. 81st St. For information about free tickets, which are required, call 212-539-8750.)

BOOCOCK'S HOUSE OF BASEBALL
In his one-man comic monologue, the longtime Elevator Repair Service actor and writer Paul Boocock ponders the rules and legends of the national pastime and struggles to apply their redemptive lessons to current American politics. Directed by Mary Catherine Burke. Opens June 30 at 9. (Flea, 41 White St. 212-352-3101.)

FATAL ATTRACTION: A GREEK TRAGEDY
A parody of the 1987 film, by Alana McNair and Kate Wilkinson, uses lit-crit techniques and a Greek chorus to explore the movie's hidden messages. Directed by Timothy Haskell. Previews begin July 1. (East 13th Street Theatre, 136 E. 13th St. 212-279-4200.)

THE SKIN GAME
The Mint Theatre revives John Galsworthy's 1920 play about feuding neighbors. Eleanor Reissa directs. In previews. (311 W. 43rd St. 212-315-0231.)

NOW PLAYING

BIRDIE BLUE
A new play about love, marriage, and time by Cheryl L. West stars S. Epatha Merkerson, Charles Weldon, and Billy Porter. Seret Scott directs. (Second Stage, 307 W. 43rd St. 212-246-4422.)

BORDER/CLASH: A LITANY OF DESIRES
Staceyann Chin, of Def Poetry Jam, delivers an arresting autobiography in verse, which travels from her Jamaican girlhood to her coming of age as a lesbian to her career in the United States as a writer and spoken-word artist. Though her story is charged with identity politics, she keeps her aggressive streak at a simmer, not a boil. Even at her most earnest, she has a breezy, disarming air, and she also has a gift that eludes many slam poets: the ability to laugh at herself. Directed by Rob Urbinati. (The Culture Project, 45 Bleecker St. 212-307-4100.)

BRITS OFF BROADWAY
A superb six-member cast performs Alan Ayckbourn's moody, intricate drama "Private Fears in Public Places," about the frayed intimacy between several sets of people of different social classes (a middle-aged brother and sister, a barman and his regular customer, a posh woman and her fiancé, a receptionist and her colleague) whose lives overlap in unpredictable ways. Three other plays also run on the many stages of 59E59: "Jackson's Way," Will Adamsdale's comic one-man show about an American motivational speaker, "Faster," presented by Filter Theatre, about the modern obsession with speed, and Stewart Permutt's "Unsuspecting Susan," starring Celia Imrie ("Calendar Girls"). (59 E. 59th St. 212-279-4200. Through July 3.)

THE CHERRY ORCHARD
Chekhov is generally considered the most modern of modernist playwrights, but this strange and inconsequential version of his last play, adapted by Tom Donaghy for the Atlantic Theatre, is far from modern. The director, Scott Zigler, has put together a stiltedly old-fashioned show, full of male bombast and female fluttering, with every moment of silence taken up by mugging or sight gags. (Reviewed in our issue of 6/27/05.) (336 W. 20th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE CONSTANT WIFE
In the Roundabout Theatre Company's splendid revival of W. Somerset Maugham's 1926 drawing-room comedy, Lynn Redgrave, wearing a dramatic veil, makes two striking entrances, playing the right and very honorable Mrs. Culver, a woman who is not afraid to speak her mind and who does so with élan. Kate Burton plays her daughter Constance, whose doctor husband of fifteen years (Michael Cumpsty) is having an affair with Marie-Louise (Kathryn Meisle)—Constance's best friend. To her mother's surprise, Constance has decided to condone *l'affaire* John and Marie-Louise, and to achieve financial independence to make a feminist point. Or so it seems. "The Constant Wife" is Oscar Wilde lite, but no matter. Everything about this production is such a pleasure—from Allen Moyer's set design and Michael Krass's costumes to Mark Brokaw's impeccable direction—that the hackneyed plot and loopy logic barely register. Burton and Redgrave bring tremendous verve to their work, showing not only their proficiency in their craft but their joy in it. (6/27/05) (American Airlines Theatre, 227 W. 42nd St. 212-719-1300.)

DRUMSTRUCK
An interactive spectacle that provides each audience member with a two-foot-tall drum comes to Dodger Stages from South Africa, where it originated in a Johannesburg café nearly a decade ago. Directed by David Warren. (340 W. 50th St. 212-279-4200.)

FOOLS IN LOVE
In a production conceived by Sarah Rosenberg and Louis Reyes Cardenas, Shakespeare's "Midsummer Night's Dream" is set in a fifties diner, accompanied by jukebox hits like "Stop! In the Name of Love," "Big Girls Don't Cry," and "Leader of the Pack." (Manhattan Ensemble Theatre, 55 Mercer St. 212-239-6200.)

FORBIDDEN BROADWAY: SPECIAL VICTIMS UNIT
The long-running satirical revue of current and recent Broadway shows and stars has moved to a new theatre. Directed by Gerard Alessandrini and Phillip George. (47th Street Theatre, 304 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200.)

MANUSCRIPT
Paul Grellong's highbrow romp begins as a drawing-room comedy among hyperliterate Ivy Leaguers (their banter could come from Whit Stillman's "Metropolitan") but turns into a cold-blooded revenge drama when the aesthetes scrap over a stolen manuscript. With Jeffrey Carlson (channelling Ryan Phillippe) and Pablo Schreiber as childhood friends and Marin Ireland ("Sabina," "4:48 Psychosis") as a manipulative young novelist who comes between them. Directed by Bob Balaban. (Daryl Roth, 101 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200.)

THE PARIS LETTER
This highly literate, delicately constructed play has much to recommend it: wonderful if somewhat mannered language by Jon Robin Baitz, clear-eyed direction by Doug Hughes, and an all-around-splendid cast. Ron Rifkin and John Glover play two longtime friends (and former lovers) who meet in middle age and argue about "truth," as one forsakes his homosexuality in favor of a more "normal" life. Daniel Eric Gold and Jason Butler Harner do an excellent job playing the men in their younger years in a series of flashbacks, and Michele Pawk, playing the celebrity-sighting, fashion-conscious Manhattanite mother of one of the boys, is especially fine. But, alas, the play's parts do not add up to a great sum, and the fault lies with the script. Baitz has poured a great deal of wit and thought into a story that ends up being the merest of melodramas, and a pretty clichéd one at that. (Laura Pels, 111 W. 46th St. 212-719-1300.)

SWIMMING IN THE SHALLOWS
Logan Marshall-Green, of "The O.C.," stars in a new play by Adam Bock, about friends who commiserate at the local aquarium about their love troubles. Trip Cullman directs. Part of the Second Stage Theatre Uptown summer series. (McGinn/Cazale, Broadway at 76th St. 212-246-4422.)

TWELFTH NIGHT
The Aquila Theatre Company presents a ten-week run of the Shakespeare comedy, conceived and directed by Peter Meineck and Robert Richmond and featuring original music by Anthony Cochrane. (Baruch Performing Arts Center, 55 Lexington Ave., between 24th and 25th Sts. 212-279-4200.)

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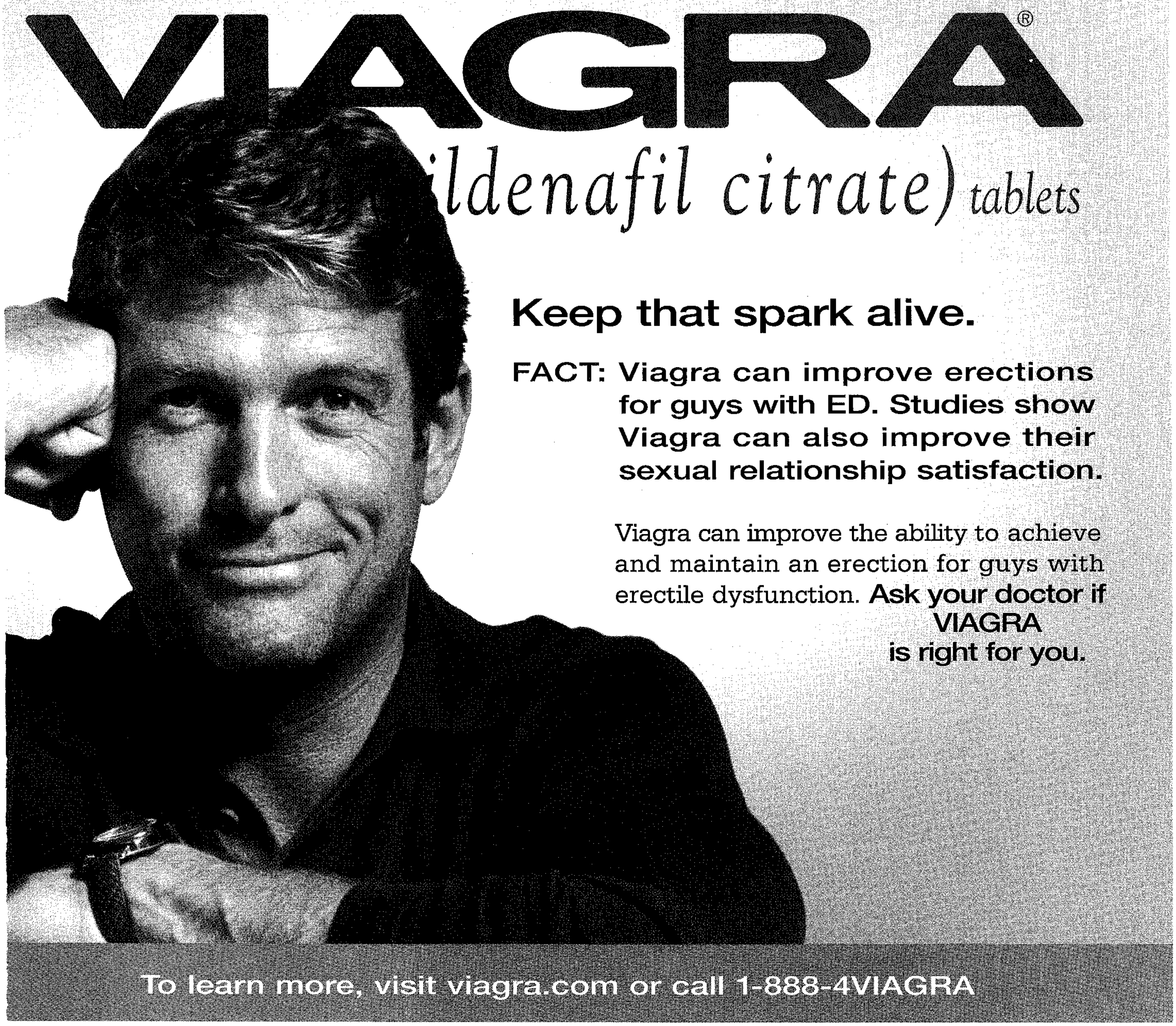
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You will not get an erection just by taking this medicine. VIAGRA helps a man with erectile dysfunction get an erection only when he is sexually excited.

• How Sex Affects the Body
When a man is sexually excited, the penis rapidly fills with more blood than usual. The penis then expands and hardens. This is called an erection. After the man is done having sex, this extra blood flows out of the penis back into the body. The erection goes away. If an erection lasts for a long time (more than 6 hours), it can permanently damage your penis. You should call a doctor immediately if you ever have a prolonged erection that lasts more than 4 hours.

Some conditions and medicines interfere with this natural erection process. The penis cannot fill with enough blood. The man cannot have an erection. This is called erectile dysfunction if it becomes a frequent problem.

During sex, your heart works harder. Therefore sexual activity may not be advisable for people who have heart problems. Before you start any treatment for erectile dysfunction, ask your doctor if your heart is healthy enough to handle the extra strain of having sex. If you have chest pains, dizziness or nausea during sex, stop having sex and immediately tell your doctor you have had this problem.

• How VIAGRA Works
VIAGRA enables many men with erectile dysfunction to respond to sexual stimulation. When a man is sexually excited, VIAGRA helps the penis fill with enough blood to cause an erection. After sex is over, the erection goes away.

• VIAGRA Is Not for Everyone
As noted above (*How Sex Affects the Body*), ask your doctor if your heart is healthy enough for sexual activity.

If you take any medicines that contain nitrates – either regularly or as needed – you should never take VIAGRA. If you take VIAGRA with any nitrate medicine or recreational drug containing nitrates, your blood pressure could suddenly drop to an unsafe level. You could get dizzy, faint, or even have a heart attack or stroke. Nitrates are found in many prescription medicines that are used to treat angina (chest pain due to heart disease) such as:

- nitroglycerin (sprays, ointments, skin patches or pastes, and tablets that are swallowed or dissolved in the mouth)
- isosorbide mononitrate and isosorbide dinitrate (tablets that are swallowed, chewed, or dissolved in the mouth)

Nitrates are also found in recreational drugs such as amyl nitrate or nitrite ("poppers"). If you are not sure if any of your medicines contain nitrates, or if you do not understand what nitrates are, ask your doctor or pharmacist.

VIAGRA is only for patients with erectile dysfunction. VIAGRA is not for newborns, children, or women. Do not let anyone else take your VIAGRA. VIAGRA must be used only under a doctor's supervision.

• What VIAGRA Does Not Do
- VIAGRA does not cure erectile dysfunction. It is a treatment for erectile dysfunction.
- VIAGRA does not protect you or your partner from getting sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV — the virus that causes AIDS.
- VIAGRA is not a hormone or an aphrodisiac.

• What To Tell Your Doctor Before You Begin VIAGRA
Only your doctor can decide if VIAGRA is right for you. VIAGRA can cause mild, temporary lowering of your blood pressure. You will need to have a thorough medical exam to diagnose your erectile dysfunction and to find out if you can safely take VIAGRA alone or with your other medicines. Your doctor should determine if your heart is healthy enough to handle the extra strain of having sex.

Be sure to tell your doctor if you:
- have ever had any heart problems (e.g., angina, chest pain, heart failure, irregular heart beats, heart attack or narrowing of the aortic valve)
- have ever had a stroke
- have low or high blood pressure
- have a rare inherited eye disease called retinitis pigmentosa
- have ever had any kidney problems
- have ever had any liver problems
- have ever had any blood problems, including sickle cell anemia or leukemia
- are allergic to sildenafil or any of the other ingredients of VIAGRA tablets
- have a deformed penis, Peyronie's disease, or ever had an erection that lasted more than 4 hours
- have stomach ulcers or any types of bleeding problems
- are taking any other medicines

• VIAGRA and Other Medicines
Some medicines can change the way VIAGRA works. Tell your doctor about **any medicines** you are taking. Do not start or stop taking any medicines before checking with your doctor or pharmacist. This includes prescription and nonprescription medicines or remedies:
- Remember, VIAGRA should never be used with medicines that contain nitrates (see *VIAGRA Is Not for Everyone*).
- If you are taking alpha-blocker therapy for the treatment of high blood pressure or prostate problems, you should not take a dose of greater than 25 mg of VIAGRA at the same time (within 4 hours) as you take your dose of alpha-blocker.
- If you are taking a protease inhibitor, your dose may be adjusted (please see *Finding the Right Dose for You*).
- VIAGRA should not be used with any other medical treatments that cause erections. These treatments include pills, medicines that are injected or inserted into the penis, implants or vacuum pumps.

• Finding the Right Dose for You
VIAGRA comes in different doses (25 mg, 50 mg and 100 mg). If you do not get the results you expect, talk with your doctor. You and your doctor can determine the dose that works best for you.
- Do not take more VIAGRA than your doctor prescribes.
- If you think you need a larger dose of VIAGRA, check with your doctor.
- VIAGRA should not be taken more than once a day.

If you are older than age 65, or have serious liver or kidney problems, your doctor may start you at the lowest dose (25 mg) of VIAGRA. If you are taking protease inhibitors, such as for the treatment of HIV, your doctor may recommend a 25 mg dose and may limit you to a maximum single dose of 25 mg of VIAGRA in a 48 hour period. If you are taking alpha-blocker therapy, you should not take a dose of greater than 25 mg of VIAGRA at the same time (within 4 hours) as your dose of alpha-blocker.

• How To Take VIAGRA
Take VIAGRA about one hour before you plan to have sex. Beginning in about 30 minutes and for up to 4 hours, VIAGRA can help you get an erection if you are sexually excited. If you take VIAGRA after a high-fat meal (such as a cheeseburger and french fries), the medicine may take a little longer to start working. VIAGRA can help you get an erection when you are sexually excited. You will not get an erection just by taking the pill.

• Possible Side Effects
Like all medicines, VIAGRA can cause some side effects. These effects are usually mild to moderate and usually don't last longer than a few hours. Some of these side effects are more likely to occur with higher doses. The most common side effects of VIAGRA are headache, flushing of the face, and upset stomach. Less common side effects that may occur are temporary changes in color vision (such as trouble telling the difference between blue and green objects or having a blue color tinge to them), eyes being more sensitive to light, or blurred vision.

In rare instances, men have reported an erection that lasts many hours. You should call a doctor immediately if you ever have an erection that lasts more than 4 hours. If not treated right away, permanent damage to your penis could occur (see *How Sex Affects the Body*).

Heart attack, stroke, irregular heart beats, and death have been reported rarely in men taking VIAGRA. Most, but not all, of these men had heart problems before taking this medicine. It is not possible to determine whether these events were directly related to VIAGRA.

VIAGRA may cause other side effects besides those listed on this sheet. If you want more information or develop any side effects or symptoms you are concerned about, call your doctor.

• Accidental Overdose
In case of accidental overdose, call your doctor right away.

• Storing VIAGRA
Keep VIAGRA out of the reach of children. Keep VIAGRA in its original container. Store at 25°C (77°F); excursions permitted to 15-30°C (59-86°F) [see USP Controlled Room Temperature].

• For More Information on VIAGRA
VIAGRA is a prescription medicine used to treat erectile dysfunction. Only your doctor can decide if it is right for you. This sheet is only a summary. If you have any questions or want more information about VIAGRA, talk with your doctor or pharmacist, visit www.viagra.com, or call 1-888-4VIAGRA.

Pfizer

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September 2002

William Finn ("Falsettos") and Rachel Sheinkin, in which each speller hams up the role of a different school-yard stereotype. Directed by James Lapine. (Circle in the Square, 50th St. west of Broadway. 212-239-6200.)

OUT OF TOWN

HUDSON VALLEY SHAKESPEARE FESTIVAL
Through the poles of the tented outdoor stage at the Boscobel Restoration, theatregoers can see the lush trees of the Palisades and the glint of the Hudson. Now playing is "The Tempest," directed by Terrence O'Brien. (Cold Spring, N.Y. For more information, visit hvshakespeare.org. 845-265-9575.)

RAGTIME
Stafford Arima's London staging of the musical by Terrence McNally (book), Stephen Flaherty (music), and Lynn Ahrens (lyrics), based on the novel by E. L. Doctorow, comes to the Paper Mill Playhouse. (Millburn, N.J. 973-376-4343.)

POWERHOUSE SEASON
The Vassar summer theatre festival continues, with a musical about Charlie Chaplin, a new drama by John Patrick Shanley called "Chain of Command," and other offerings. For a full festival schedule, visit powerhouse.vassar.edu. (Poughkeepsie, N.Y. 845-437-5599. Through July 31.)

Also Playing

AFTER THE NIGHT AND THE MUSIC: Biltmore, 261 W. 47th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes July 3.) **ALL SHOOK UP:** Palace, Broadway at 47th St. 212-307-4100. **ALTAR BOYZ:** Dodger Stages, 340 W. 50th St. 212-239-6200. **AVENUE Q:** Golden, 252 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **BEAST ON THE MOON:** Century Center for the Performing Arts, 111 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **CHITTY CHITTY BANG BANG:** Hilton, 213 W. 42nd St. 212-307-4100. **DIRTY ROTTEN SCOUNDRELS:** Imperial, 249 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **DOUBT:** Walter Kerr, 219 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **FIDDLER ON THE ROOF:** Minskoff, 200 W. 45th St. 212-307-4100. **THE GLASS MENAGERIE:** Ethel Barrymore, 243 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. (Closes July 3.) **GLENGARRY GLEN ROSS:** Bernard B. Jacobs, 242 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **HURLYBURLY:** 37 Arts, 450 W. 37th St. 212-307-4100. (Closes July 2.) **LAZER VAUDEVILLE:** Lamb's Theatre, 130 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **THE LIGHT IN THE PIAZZA:** Vivian Beaumont, Lincoln Center. 212-239-6200. **MAMMA MIA!:** Winter Garden, Broadway at 50th St. 212-563-5544. **MONTY PYTHON'S SPAMALOT:** Shubert, 225 W. 44th St. 212-239-6200. **ORSON'S SHADOW:** Barrow Street Theatre, 27 Barrow St. 212-239-6200. **THE PILLOWMAN:** Booth, 222 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **STEEL MAGNOLIAS:** Lyceum, 149 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **A STREETCAR NAMED DESIRE:** Studio 54, at 254 W. 54th St. 212-719-1300. **SWEET CHARITY:** Al Hirschfeld, 302 W. 45th St. 212-239-6200. **THE TALK OF THE TOWN:** Algonquin Hotel, 59 W. 44th St. 212-840-6800. **THOM PAIN (BASED ON NOTHING):** DR2, 103 E. 15th St. 212-239-6200. **WHO'S AFRAID OF VIRGINIA WOOLF?:** Longacre, 220 W. 48th St. 212-239-6200. **WICKED:** Gershwin, 222 W. 51st St. 212-307-4100.

NIGHT LIFE
ROCK AND POP

Musicians and night-club proprietors live complicated lives; it's advisable to call ahead to confirm engagements.

B. B. KING BLUES CLUB & GRILL
237 W. 42nd St. (212-997-4144)—June 29: **Mountain,** known for high-volume, bluesy rock and the song "Mississippi Queen." June 30: The rapper turned movie star **Ja Rule.** July 1: The ska-punk of Southern California's **Aquabats.** July 5: **Proto-Kaw.** After a long-lost set of pre-success demo tapes surfaced in 2001, the multi-instrumentalist and song-

writer Kerry Livgren re-formed (and renamed) this early iteration of Kansas, his seventies supergroup, beloved by classic-rock radio and reviled by millions.

BOWERY BALLROOM
6 Delancey St. (212-533-2111)—**Longwave** weaves a broad sonic tapestry with its guitars, expanding on the new-rock terrain staked out by the likes of the Strokes and the Yeah Yeah Yeahs. They're here June 29 with songs from their new album, "There's a Fire." June 30: **Lhasa.** The otherworldly singer-songwriter Lhasa de Sela, who records and performs under her first name, was born in upstate New York, lives in Montreal, and appears in New York City only on occasion. She delivers her achingly beautiful ballads in French, Spanish, and English.

BOWERY POETRY CLUB
308 Bowery, at Bleecker St. (212-614-0505)—**Andy Friedman,** a visual artist (his cartoons have appeared in this magazine under the name Larry Hat) who is also a guitar-toting, high-minded musician, is here Thursdays through July 7, along with his five-piece band, the Other Failures, and projections of his drawings and photographs.

CELEBRATE BROOKLYN!
Prospect Park Band Shell, Prospect Park W. at 9th St. (718-855-7882, ext. 45)—June 30: A night of bluegrass with the **Del McCoury Band.** The legendary songwriter **Chip Taylor** ("Wild Thing," "Angel of the Morning") and his fiddling and singing partner **Carrie Rodriguez** open. July 1: The soulful vocalist **Bilal.** July 2: The calypso and soca legend **Shadow** (a.k.a. Winston Bailey) brings a bit of Trinidad to Brooklyn. Expect a carnival of sound, with steel drums, heavy bass, lively horns, and Shadow's distinctive deep voice. A pair of Trinidadian expatriate poets, **Roger Bonair-Agard** and **Cheryl Boyce Taylor,** start the night with their hard-hitting words.

CENTRAL PARK SUMMERSTAGE
Rumsey Playfield, mid-Park at 72nd St. (212-360-2777)—June 29: The former Talking Heads front man and globe-trotting music executive **David Byrne** headlines a benefit show for this mostly free music series. **Pink Martini,** the Latin-leaning little orchestra from Portland, Oregon, opens. July 2: Nick Drake died thirty-one years ago, but his cult audience underwent a sizable surge a few years ago following the use of his haunting folk rock in an artful television commercial for Volkswagen. Here, **Josh Max, Julie James,** and an orchestra arranged and conducted by the Drake collaborator **Robert Kirby** pay tribute to the troubadour.

CHINA 1
50 Avenue B, at 3rd St. (212-375-0665)—June 29: The d.j. duo **Syrup** takes over the turntables.

HAPPY ENDING
302 Broome St., between Forsyth and Eldridge Sts. (212-334-9676)—June 28: The d.j. duo **Syrup.**

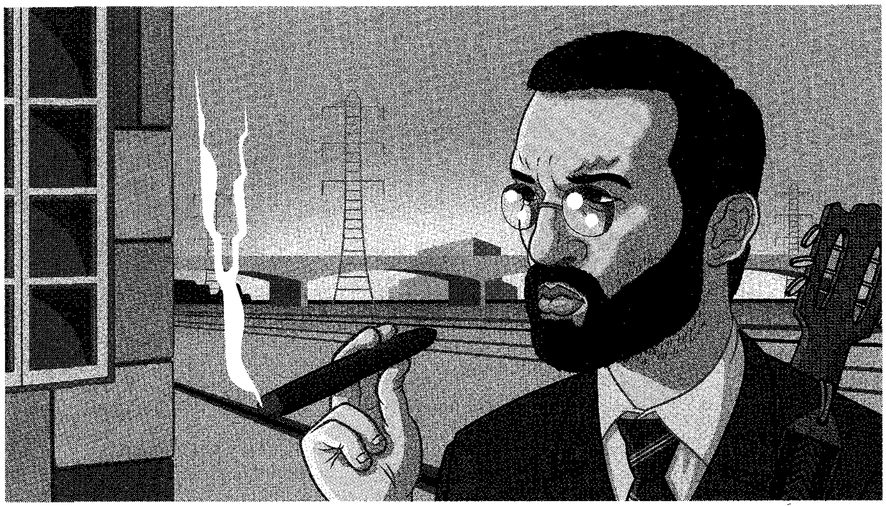
IRVING PLAZA
17 Irving Pl., at 15th St. (212-777-6800)—**Meat Beat Manifesto** has evolved beyond the industrial scene that spawned it some twenty years ago. Jack Dangers, the mastermind behind the aggressive dance-music outfit, has always had a maverick approach to sampling. At first, the group embraced elements of hip-hop, and then they went on to explore techno. With their latest release, "At the Center," Dangers and company cruise confidently into associative-jazz territory. On June 30, the group makes its first N.Y.C. appearance in seven years.

JOE'S PUB
425 Lafayette St. (212-539-8777)—The devoted singer-songwriter **Michelle Shocked** recently released not one but three albums. On June 29 she plays each of them, starting with a family matinée for "Got No Strings," a set of covers from Disney films, followed by "Don't Ask Don't Tell," a rock album, and "Mexican Standoff," a collection of cross-border blues tunes. July 5: The **Luminescent Orchestrii** draws on Gypsy ballads, klezmer songs, Appalachian fiddle tunes, and punk music. It mixes the sound with a bullhorn harmonica, a human beat-boxer, and a frenzy of violins. With the five-member Balkan women's choir **Dragana.**

"MIDSUMMER NIGHT SWING"
Fountain Plaza, Lincoln Center (212-721-6500)—The alfresco dancing continues on June 28 with the traditional swing of **Wayne Roberts** and the **Onyx Club Sextet,** followed by the merengue of **Francisco Ulloa** (June 29), the Palladium-era mambo and cha-cha of the **Harbor Latin Big Band** (June 30), the jump blues and swing of **Duke Robillard** (July 1), a special afternoon kids' square dance on July 2, and later that night, the Western swing of **John England,** who will be joined by the vocalist **Leon Rausch.** Through July 16.

RIVER TO RIVER FESTIVAL
The veteran indie rockers **Yo La Tengo** have a new album, "Prisoners of Love," that chronicles the band's last two decades of consistently stellar music. Sharing the bill for this afternoon Independence Day show is the former Pavement front man, **Stephen Malkmus.** The alt-country singer-songwriter **Laura Cantrell** opens. (The Lawn at Battery Park. July 4. For more information, call 212-835-2789.)

SCENIC
25 Avenue B, at 2nd St. (646-536-3654)—Located in the East Village space that once was the after-hours club Save the Robots, and, more recently, the restaurant and lounge Guernica, this bi-level club promises booze, burgers, and bands seven nights a week. It is run by veterans of the Knitting Factory and Wetlands, the former of which perfected the mix of presenting up-and-coming local acts and national talent, the latter of which fell victim to the city's real-estate market. The Norwegian pop sensation **Annie,** best known for her hit "Chewing Gum," opens the club on June 29.



Mark Oliver Everett, otherwise known as E, brings his band Eels to Town Hall.

MICHAEL WELDON

SOUTHPAW
125 Fifth Ave., Park Slope, Brooklyn (718-230-0236)—July 3: **Tracy Bonham,** a classically trained violinist and singer-songwriter with a jagged edge, stops by with songs from her latest album, "Blink the Brightest."

TOWN HALL
123 W. 43rd St. (212-840-2824)—June 30: Led by Mark Oliver Everett (a hypertalented misfit who calls himself E), **Eels** have wooed critics and rewarded fans with a series of deeply personal and highly engaging albums since the group first started recording, more than a decade ago. Their latest effort, "Blinking Lights and Other Revelations," is a thirty-three-song, two-disk epic.

JAZZ AND STANDARDS

AU BAR
41 E. 58th St. (212-308-9455)—June 29-July 3: **Jason Robert Brown,** the composer of the 1998 Broadway succès d'estime "Parade," makes his own case for his work.

BIRDLAND
315 W. 44th St. (212-581-3080)—June 29-July 2: **Toshiko Akiyoshi** has returned to her first love, the piano trio, after having retired the formidable big band she led with her husband, Lew Tabackin, for more than three decades.

BLUE NOTE
131 W. 3rd St., near Sixth Ave. (212-475-8592)—June 28-July 3: The **Dizzy Gillespie Alumni All-Star Big Band.** The great trumpeter has been gone for more than a decade, but the presence of his trusted associates, including **Slide Hampton** and **Jimmy Heath,** insures a virtuosic and feisty take on Gillespie's inspired blend of bop, big band, and Latin music.

DIZZY'S CLUB COCA-COLA
Broadway at 60th St. (212-258-9595)—June 28-July 3: Three gifted trumpeters, **Nicholas Payton, Tom Harrell,** and **Jeremy Pelt,** salute the short-lived Clifford Brown in honor of the seventy-fifth anniversary of his birth.

IRIDIUM
1650 Broadway, at 51st St. (212-582-2121)—June 30-July 3: The **Jeff Berlin Band.** The legendary prog-rock and fusion electric bassist makes his instrument do all but the impossible. Mondays belong to the electric-guitar innovator **Les Paul.** The **Mingus Big Band** takes over on Tuesdays.

JAZZ GALLERY
290 Hudson St., near Spring St. (212-242-1063)—June 30: **Gretchen Parlato** comes armed with a 2004 Thelonious Monk International Jazz Vocals Competition win, as well as the effusive praise of both Herbie Hancock and Wayne Shorter.

JAZZ STANDARD
116 E. 27th St. (212-576-2232)—July 1-2: The pianist **Makoto Ozone,** a noted associate of Gary Burton, heads up his own trio. July 5-6: The **Lenny White, Joe Locke,** and **Victor Bailey Experience** mates a full-force bass-and-drum team (White and Bailey) with a loquacious vibraphonist.

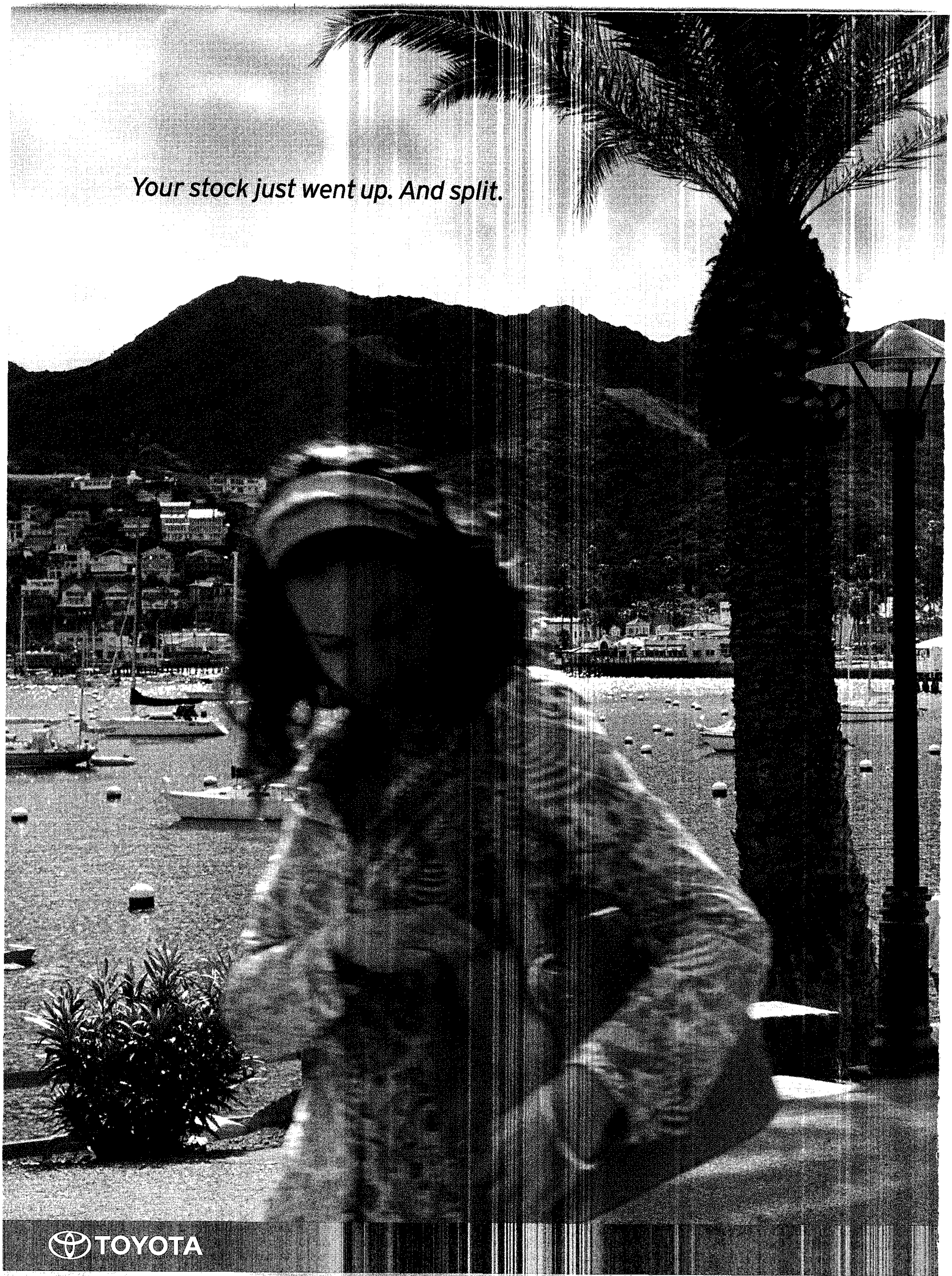
SMOKE
2751 Broadway, between 105th and 106th Sts. (212-864-6662)—July 1-2: The **Harold Mabern** trio. It's been some fifty years since Mabern left Memphis, but he's never lost the blues-based ebullience that made him a mainstream-piano giant.

VILLAGE VANGUARD
178 Seventh Ave. S., at 11th St. (212-255-4037)—Bebop piano doesn't always have to emulate a marathon run. With flowing keyboard passages that ripple rather than surge, the veteran pianist and jazz educator **Barry Harris** (here June 28-July 3) embodies the pleasures of leisurely bop improvisation. The **Vanguard Jazz Orchestra** holds sway on Mondays.

ART

MUSEUMS AND LIBRARIES

METROPOLITAN MUSEUM
Fifth Ave. at 82nd St. (212-879-5500)—**"All the Mighty World: The Photographs of Roger Fenton, 1852-1860."** Beginning when photography was still in its infancy, Fenton devoted a little less than a decade to the new medium before returning to his law practice. In that short time he produced a remarkably large and varied body of work, the bulk of it in England, where he photographed the countryside, the cathedrals, and the contents of the British Museum.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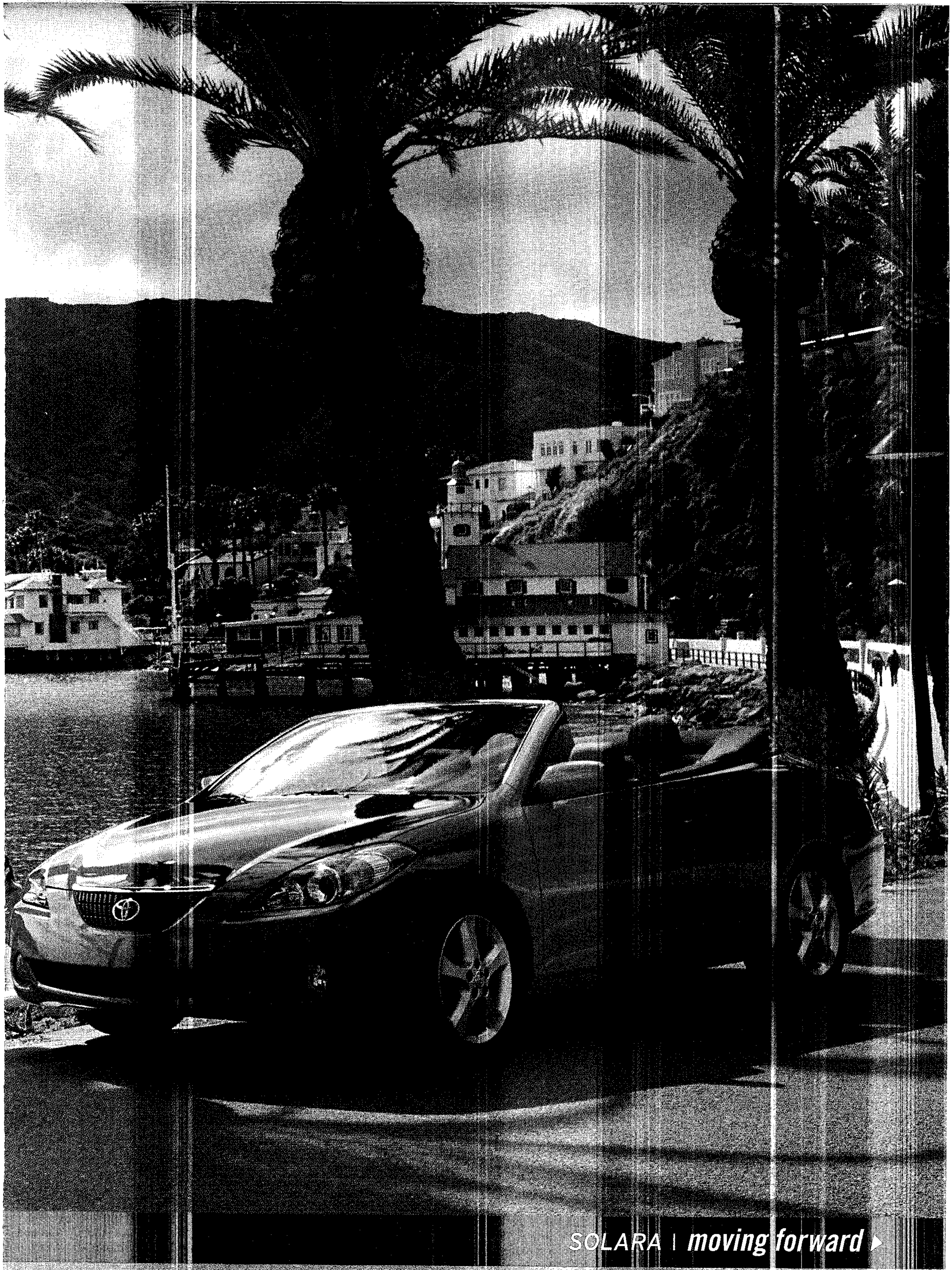
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CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
POURING IT ON

New York night life's best-kept secret is the female d.j. team Syrup, made up of Vivian Host and Kristin Vincent, twenty-six and thirty-two, respectively. There are few other women-d.j. duos, but gender isn't all that makes Syrup unique. In the oddly self-serious community of dance-music d.j.s, Syrup—who play a pair of shows this week at Happy Ending and China 1—are the irreverent exception, catholic in taste and refreshingly cheeky. Their mixtape CDs come with brightly colored art work and line drawings of half-naked women and are filled with fleet, syncopated, often raunchy songs that draw on two-step, grime, and Miami bass. Both ribald and bubbly, Host and Vincent dance while they d.j., with a visible enjoyment that reflects their low-key attitude and disregard for careerism. "I haven't been d.j.ing for this many years—since I was fifteen—to quit if I don't become a superstar," Host said. "It's worth losing money to me. I mean, if we're losing a lot of money, that would be a problem. But it's worth losing a little, or breaking even, to have the crazy adventures that we get to have."

—*Sasha Frere-Jones*

YUKO SHIMIZU

Fenton's earliest pictures were of the Kremlin, and some of his most haunting works record the battlefields of the Crimean War. With the exception of some Turneresque cloudscapes, the images are rarely sublime, but they are always subtle, rich, and deftly definitive. Through Aug. 21. ♦ **"Matisse: The Fabric of Dreams, His Art and His Textiles"** pairs swatches from the artist's collection of fabrics with some seventy-five paintings, drawings, prints, and collages. Through Sept. 25. ♦ Two recent installations are on view in **"Tony Oursler at the Met: 'Studio' and 'Climaxed.' "** The first contemplates the influences at work on the artist through an assemblage of pieces by the likes of Jacqueline Humphries, Rem Koolhaas, and Kaare Rafoss. The second, more traditional Oursler work is a giant, lumpy potato head with flames and a blinky face projected on it, its mouth voicing demented and hilarious threats, boasts, and sorrows. Through Sept. 18. ♦ **"Chanel,"** a retrospective of designs from the couture house. Through Aug. 7. ♦ **"John Townsend: Newport Cabinetmaker"** presents a few dozen pieces by a prominent Colonial American furniture-maker alongside work by his contemporaries. Through Sept. 25. ♦ **"Sol LeWitt on the Roof: Splotches, Whirls, and Twirls."** A summer installation in the roof garden of five spiky stalagmite sculptures and a wall drawing. Through Oct. 30. ♦ **"Max Ernst: A Retrospective."** Some hundred and eighty paintings, drawings, sculptures, collages, and illustrated books by the restlessly creative artist (1891-1976). Through July 10. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 9:30 to 5:30, and Friday and Saturday evenings until 9.)

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9400)—**"Pioneering Modern Painting: Cézanne and Pissarro, 1865-1885."** Through Sept. 12. ♦ **"Friedlander,"** a major retrospective of the work of the photographer Lee Friedlander (born 1934). Through Aug. 29. ♦ **"The High Line"** details Field Operations and Diller Scofidio & Renfro's ambitious urban rails-to-trails scheme for the abandoned elevated tracks that run along the West Side from Gansevoort to Thirty-fourth Street. Through Oct. 31. (Open Wednesdays through Mondays, 10:30 to 5:30, and Friday evenings until 8.)

GUGGENHEIM MUSEUM

Fifth Ave. at 89th St. (212-423-3500)—**"Robert Mapplethorpe and the Classical Tradition: Photographs and Mannerist Prints."** Opens July 1. ♦ **"Oteiza: Myth and Modernism."** Opens July 1. ♦ **"Art of Tomorrow: Hilla Rebay and Solomon R. Guggenheim."** Through Aug. 10. (Open Saturdays through Wednesdays, 10 to 5:45, and Fridays, 10 to 8.)

WHITNEY MUSEUM OF AMERICAN ART

Madison Ave. at 75th St. (212-570-3676)—A retrospective of work by the maker of the iconic "Spiral Jetty" is on view in **"Robert Smithson."** Through Oct. 23. ♦ **"Remote Viewing: Invented Worlds in Recent Painting and Drawing."** Through Oct. 9. ♦ The eclectic gathering of works from the permanent collection in **"Landscape"** ranges from Jasper Johns's white maps to Ed Ruscha's rows of L.A. streets to Roni Horn's eerie comparison of the body and the earth, "Becoming a Landscape" (1999-2001). Through Sept. 18. ♦ **"Banks Violette: Untitled"** contemplates the romantic sublime with a model of a ruined church cast in salt, backed with music by the Black Metal musician Snorre Ruch. This is Violette's first solo show at a museum. Through Oct. 2. ♦ **"Prints Into Drawings,"** a roomful of prints that were made in the last fifty years, illustrates the shared techniques of drawing and printmaking. Through Aug. 28. (Open Wednesdays, Thursdays, and weekends, 11 to 6, and Fridays, 1 to 9.)

BROOKLYN MUSEUM OF ART

200 Eastern Parkway (718-638-5000)—**"Monet's London: Artists' Reflections on the Thames 1859-1914."** Through Sept. 4. ♦ **"Michelangelo of the Menagerie: Bronze Works by Antoine-Louis Barye."** Through July 24. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, 10 to 5, and Saturdays and Sundays, 11 to 6.)

CENTER FOR JEWISH HISTORY

15 W. 16th St. (917-606-8200)—A small but dense collection of memorabilia, **"Greetings from Home: 350 Years of American Jewish Life"** presents nice tidbits like the Chutzpah board game (ca. 1967), a series of Haggadah booklets catering to special-interest constituents from lesbians to G.I.s, and a wonderful short film called "A Pictorial Review of Kolbuszowa," made by an immigrant named Peysakh Zuckerman, who took a newsreel cameraman back to his Polish village in 1929, filmed the smiling graybeards and mugging kids in jaunty black-and-white, and brought the footage back to New York, where he raised money in the Polish Jewish community to send to the folks back in Europe. It's like a flower pressed in a dictionary before the horrors of the war to come. Through Sept. 15. (Open Mondays through Thursdays 11 to 7, Fridays 11 to 3, and Sundays 11 to 5.)

CHELSEA ART MUSEUM

556 W. 22nd St. (212-255-0719)—Eighty diminutive etchings from an original 1799 print run of Francisco Goya's **"Los Caprichos"** are interspersed with a show of contemporary work, **"Here Comes the Bogey-Man."** Through Sept. 24. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, noon to 6, and Thursday evenings until 8.)

DAHESH MUSEUM OF ART

580 Madison Ave., at 57th St. (212-759-0606)—On the museum's tenth anniversary, **"The Dahesh Collection: Celebrating a Decade of Discovery"** honors the academic tradition that ruled supreme before modernism. The galleries are tastefully stuffed with creamy maidens, turbaned Turks, crowded seraglios, champing horses, winsome shepherds, and Pygmalionesque artists at work. Bouguereau, Gérôme, Cabanel, and Doré are the big names, but there are plenty of small names, too, as well as some charmingly unfinished canvases, like Auguste Bonheur's legless cows or Léon Bonnat's faceless Virgin (legs and faces being the difficult bits). Through Sept. 22. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 11 to 6.)

FRICK COLLECTION

1 E. 70th St. (212-288-0700)—**"From Callot to Greuze: French Drawings from Weimar."** Through Aug. 7. (Open Tuesdays through Saturdays, 10 to 6; Sundays, 1 to 6.)

MUSEUM OF THE CITY OF NEW YORK

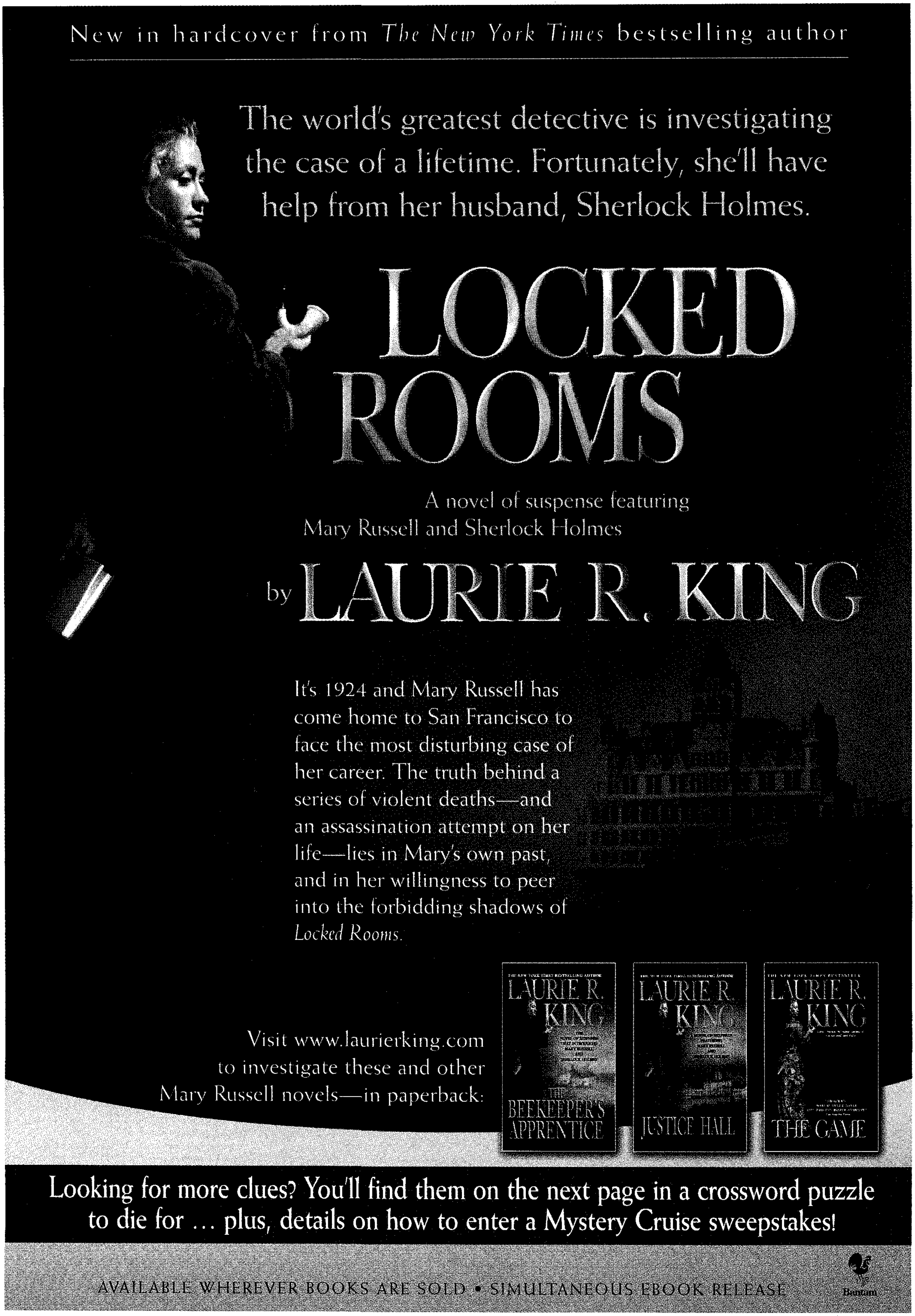
Fifth Ave. at 104th St. (212-534-1672)—**"The Destruction of Lower Manhattan: Photographs by Danny Lyon."** Photographs from 1966 and 1967 of the nineteenth-century buildings that were demolished to make way for the World Trade Center. Through Sept. 18. ♦ **"Timescapes"** compresses four hundred years of New York City history into a twenty-two-minute presentation of morphing maps and archival photographs. It's an absorbing biography of the city, neatly organized into chapters that outline the city's explosion out into its five boroughs, up into skyscrapers, and down into the subway system. Ongoing. ♦ Gorgeous getups—like a Worth & Bobergh gown (ca. 1860) in silver silk flocked with coral velvet, or the Maggie Norris silk-satin corset worn by Nicole Kidman on a 2001 *Vanity Fair* cover—are on view in **"Glamour, New York Style,"** a shamelessly indulgent paean to decades of local chic. Through July 4. (Open Tuesdays through Sundays, 10 to 5.)

THE SCULPTURE CENTER

44-19 Purves St., Long Island City (718-361-1750)—The twenty-eight young artists in **"Make It Now: New Sculpture in New York"** are collectively refining ironic rag-picking into earnest recycling. Ester Partegàs's "Monument to the Truth" is an enormous mass concealed under a blue tarp, cordoned off by plywood, and marked "Pardon our appearance while under construction." Assemblages of scrap wood, pill bottles, Styrofoam, Coca-Cola, bubble wrap, and cardboard boxes posit personal agency in the face of junk-culture inundation. In spite of this more or less coherent statement, though, much of the work isn't up to snuff—even established artists like Rachel Harrison, Vincent Mazeau, Phoebe Washburn, and Luis Gispert to have brought B-game objects. Through July 31. (Open Thursdays through Mondays, 11 to 6.)

STUDIO MUSEUM IN HARLEM

144 W. 125th St. (212-864-4500)—Chris Ofili's **"Afro Muses"** (1995-2005) are woozily outlined "imaginary portraits" in watercolor, drawn from history, memory, and everyday life. Through July 3. (Open Wednesdays through Fridays, and Sundays, noon to 6; and Saturdays, 10 to 6.)



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by Kelly Ann Buchanan

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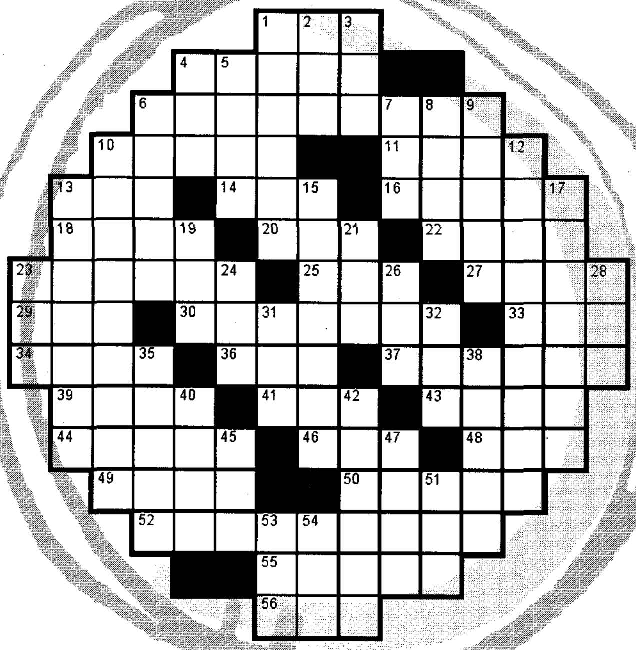

ACROSS

1. "Locked Rooms" setting, __ Francisco

4. Mycroft Holmes to Sherlock Holmes, *en français*

6. " 'Dartmoor. It's just there.' He nodded over his shoulder. 'It rises up in a ___ . . .' " (see excerpt from "The Moor")

10. Some of the Holy City's monks in "O Jerusalem" are shrouded in these

11. The bitter quarrels Mary Russell and her aunt have are developing into one of these (see excerpt from "The Beekeeper's Apprentice")

13. London's Big __

14. Morse "help!" (not the code needed in "The Beekeeper's Apprentice," unfortunately)

16. In "Locked Rooms," Mary stands on the ship dreaming of California's __ firma

18. Paradise (unlike the moors when night falls)

20. Sharp little bite from the hound of the Baskervilles

22. Darned

23. First Murder connector

25. French symbol, fleur-de-__ (in "A Letter of Mary," Russell receives an envelope from the Hôtel Imperial in Paris)

27. "There were indeed bees, industriously working at stuffing pollen into those leg __ of theirs, moving from flower to flower." (see excerpt from "The Beekeeper's Apprentice")

29. Russell has close-cropped hair in "Locked Rooms," and, wearing her customary trousers, to some Mary appears __

30. Pouches for storing devices of detection such as magnifying glasses

33. Holmes' suit accessory, handy for binding captured villains

34. Titles for Arthur Conan Doyle and others

36. "Uh-uh."

37. __ Downs, where Russell meets Holmes (see excerpt from "The Beekeeper's Apprentice")

39. At the time of "The Beekeeper's Apprentice," women were not yet allowed to __

41. Evidence on the moor, __ prints

43. Shines upon the Devonshire moors at dusk

44. Fancy pitchers

46. A chasing game

48. A three-lettered bug, generally terrestrial

49. Sherlock Holmes, experience-wise

50. Sources of the stuff rendering Mary Russell's face invisible in the night (see excerpt from "O Jerusalem")

52. "A __ Regiment of Women" (second novel in the Russell series)

55. Character who appears in "The Moor," the Reverend Sabine Baring-__

56. Thanks, from Brits

DOWN

1. Spring, for one

2. The __ of detecting (what Mary Russell learns from Sherlock Holmes)

3. Not old

4. "Back and forth, to and __, and all the while, beneath the surface the marine equivalents of earthworms and moles would. . ." (see excerpt from "Locked Rooms")

5. Commies

6. Whoever meets the Baskerville hound on the moor at night is surely one of these

7. Ship's stern

8. Sheltered sides of ships

9. Decoys

10. Shrubs that separate fields

12. "I had, I should mention, always assumed that a large part of __ adulatory stories were a product of that gentleman's inferior imagination." (see excerpt from "The Beekeeper's Apprentice")

13. Bzzz-er's abode

15. ". . . following an absence of two days in London when the only things shed were furled umbrella and ___ . . ." (see excerpt from "Justice Hall")

17. How Mary describes the tweed greatcoat Sherlock is wearing when she first meets him (see excerpt from "The Beekeeper's Apprentice")

19. Perhaps this nicknamed Roman god of the sea was calling to Mary to join him (see excerpt from "Locked Rooms")

21. Mrs. Hudson might serve her employer one of these, meat or apple

23. U.S. prosecutors

24. Really long time

26. Baker et al., briefly (Sherlock Holmes has his flat here when he meets Mary Russell)

28. "'Oh for heaven's sake, Holmes, you sound like Freud. The man had __ on the brain.'" (see excerpt from "Locked Rooms")

31. Pipe and __ (Sherlock Holmes' trademarks)

32. Put the pieces of the puzzle together = __ it all up

35. The engine gives off this stuff when the train leaves Russell at the Coryton Station (see excerpt from "The Moor")

38. The Baskerville hound's owner might use these to clean the carpet

40. Therefore

42. Sported by Sherlock Holmes creator Sir Arthur Conan Doyle, __ mustache

45. American—or ancient Roman—legislator, for short (a daughter of an American one gets kidnapped in "The Beekeeper's Apprentice")

47. After the case is solved, slammer for the slayer, British style

51. On wet Dartmoor, Russell slogs through this in "The Moor"

53. Noncom officer of WWI (which is ongoing during "The Beekeeper's Apprentice")

54. "When we had exhausted the various topics, we sat down __ meal . . ." (see excerpt from "The Game")

MYSTERY CROSSWORD PUZZLE CONTEST RULES

1. NO PURCHASE NECESSARY.

2. Contest starts June 27, 2005 12:01 A.M. EST, and ends 11:59 P.M. EST, August 5, 2005. All contestants must be 18 years of age or older and a legal resident of the 50 United States or District of Columbia as of the date of entry.

3. Contestants may submit one (1) entry per person. All entries must be received by 11:59 P.M. EST, August 5, 2005. All submitted entries become the property of The Condé Nast Publications ("Sponsors") and will not be acknowledged or returned.

4. Contestants may enter the contest by completing and submitting via mail the Bantam Crossword Puzzle or a photocopy thereof found in the July 4, 2005 issue of *The New Yorker* along with name, address, telephone in an envelope addressed to Laurie R. King Mystery Crossword Puzzle Contest, *The New Yorker* Promotion Department, 4 Times Square, New York, NY 10036. Sponsors are not responsible for entries that are late, lost, misdirected, postage due, illegible, incomplete, or mutilated. Sponsors in their sole discretion reserve the right to disqualify any person tampering with the entry process or otherwise in violation of the rules. Sponsors further reserve the right to cancel, terminate, or modify any promotion not capable of completion as planned.

5. Only entries that have all the correct answers will be eligible to win ("Eligible Entries"). One grand-prize winner will be selected at random from Eligible Entries received on or about August 26, 2005. All decisions of the judges are final and binding. The grand prize is a mystery cruise for two with an approximate retail value of $3,000 depending upon exact itinerary. Cruise destination to be determined by Sponsor. Prize includes two cruise tickets for a 5-day/4-night mystery cruise, including port taxes, accommodations, most meals; round-trip coach airfare for two from the major commercial airport in the U.S. nearest to winner's home; transportation to/from port of departure. All other expenses are the responsibility of the winner and guest. Income and other taxes, if any, are the sole responsibility of the winner. Winner will receive a written notification of the time, date, location, and other details about the cruise. If the winner is unable or unwilling to accept the mystery cruise as offered in the notification, sponsor reserves the right to disqualify the winner and select an alternate winner.

6. Subject to all federal, state and local laws and regulations. Void outside of the 50 United States and District of Columbia, and where prohibited. Sponsors are not responsible for errors in the administration or fulfillment of this sweepstakes, including without limitation mechanical, human, printing, distribution or production error at their sole discretion without liability.

7. The odds of winning depend on the number of correct entries received. No substitution for prize except by sponsors in which case a prize of equal or greater value will be substituted.

8. Employees of Condé Nast Publications and Random House ("Sponsors") and their immediate families are not eligible to enter.

9. Acceptance of prize constitutes consent to use the winner's name and likeness for editorial, advertising, and publicity purposes without further compensation, except where prohibited. Potential winner may be required to sign an Affidavit of Eligibility and winner and travel companion a Liability/Publicity release within 10 days of date of attempted notification or an alternate winner may be chosen.

10. For name of the winner, send a self-addressed, stamped envelope to: Laurie R. King Mystery Crossword Puzzle Contest Winner List: *The New Yorker* Promotion Department, 4 Times Square, 21st floor, New York, NY 10036 after August 26, 2005 but before February 26, 2006.

ILLUSTRATION BY ROB ROTH

GALLERIES-UPTOWN

Summer-hours warning: many galleries are open Mondays through Fridays, from around 10 or 11 to between 5 and 6. Others follow the normal Tuesday-to-Saturday schedule. It's best to call ahead.

JOSEPH SZABO
Szabo was a teacher at Malverne High School on Long Island when he took the photographs in "Teenage," and one wonders how this project affected his classroom technique. With a combination of anthropological detachment, parental tenderness, and not a little awe, Szabo made regular forays into a world where adolescents ruled. The pictures he brought back may not be revelatory, but they're sweet and funny and often dead-on. The look is high seventies, but the tribal rites are timeless, and in nearly every shot Szabo manages to connect with a boy or girl whose anxiety, arrogance, pain, or self-absorption seems particularly undefended and touching. Through Aug. 6. (Gitterman, 170 E. 75th St. 212-734-0868.)

"LIVING AND WORKING IN VIENNA"
A slick show of artists chosen on a jaunt to Vienna last December, shoehorned into the Austrian Cultural Forum's narrow, echt-modern midtown space. The New Museum curator Trevor Smith made the selections, and the disorienting effect of looking at these works in the stated context is obvious. A video by Carola Dertnig, of the artist trailing a red stocking behind her in a train station, Marko Lulic's appropriation of a nineteen-seventies Yugoslavian documentary, a black-and-white video of the designers Fabrics Interseason demonstrating at other designers' shows in Paris (which apes images of the 1968 Paris protests), and Dorit Margreiter's video of a John Lautner house in Los Angeles underscore the current art world's globalism and the universality of popular tropes. Living and working in Vienna seems rather beside the point. Through Aug. 20. (11 E. 52nd St. 212-319-5300.)

Short List

GLEN BAXTER: Flowers, 1000 Madison Ave., at 78th St. 212-439-1700. Through July 30. **JANET CARDIFF:** Starts at the kiosk on Central Park South at Sixth Avenue; a credit card or photo I.D. is required to take out the audio equipment. Thursdays through Sundays, 10 to 3:30. For more information or for reservations, call the Public Art Fund at 212-980-3942. Through Sept. 11.

GALLERIES-CHELSEA

WALTON FORD
The dreams of pioneering naturalists inspire Ford's persnickety but majestic watercolors. Leonardo da Vinci's famous vision of being attacked, or succored, by a hawk as he lay in his cradle and John James Audubon's nightmarish memory of a golden eagle fighting a trap are rendered by Ford as parables of menace and nostalgia. The centerpiece is a monumental triptych based on an anecdote from George Catlin, in which a buffalo—incongruously standing in a manicured formal garden—fends off a pack of bloody wolves clad in fluffy white wool like sheep. Through July 1. (Kasmin, 293 Tenth Ave. 212-563-4474.)

PHYLLIS GALEMBO
In Galembo's photographs of carnival celebrants and vodou priests, her subjects are usually costumed and masked, but even when their faces are uncovered it's clear that they've left their everyday identities far behind. Made over the past twenty years in Nigeria, Haiti, and Brazil, these terrifically theatrical images suggest that clothes—and a belief in the power of transformation—can indeed make the man or woman. Although the outfits here (many of which involve cross-dressing and body paint) can be comically outlandish, we can't fail to appreciate their ritual weight. Through July 29. (Sepia, 148 W. 24th St. 212-645-9444.)

ANNA JÓELSDÓTTIR
If you had one of those family-tree genealogies of modern art (made famous by Alfred Barr and Ad Reinhardt), Jóelsdóttir's work would stem from two different branches: the cerebral, linear abstraction of painters like Barnett Newman and Kenneth Noland and the angsty, squiggly expressionism of artists like Egon Schiele. Angular, tricolored stripes, like racing colors or road dividers, end in tangled, scribbled, frenetic bursts, like a lightning bolt emitting a charge. The white grounds of the paintings serve as perfect stages for each round in what seems a more lasting and epic bout. Through July 9. (Stux, 530 W. 25th St. 212-352-1600.)

GERALD MONROE
"During my more than fifty years as a painter," writes Monroe in his artist's statement, "I have maintained a consistent commitment to the old-time religion of modern art." The faith is kept with gestural, allover canvases whose combinations of orange and green, red and green, or blue and green denote leaf-and-bloom, sunlight-and-shadow motifs. There is also a suite of simple, linear oil-stick-on-paper drawings of plants in pots. The show will please or not, depending on your willingness to be moved by such painterly piety. Through July 29. (Steinberg, 526 W. 26th St. 212-924-5770.)

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"327, 329, and 331 Washington Street, Between Jay and Harrison Streets," from 1967, by Danny Lyon, at the Museum of the City of New York.

"GREATER BROOKLYN"
Recent art-school grads get their own ensemble show, with thirty painters, sculptors, photographers, and makers of drawings represented by one work each. Short-list mention goes to Keiko Narahashi's small construction of red-and-white boxes sitting like abstracted cereal boxes on their own shelf and George Boorujy's realist drawing of a disturbingly hairy-chested Abraham Lincoln. If an overarching mood can be discerned, it involves painstaking facture, low-tech pride, and an understanding of irony so deep that it doubles back on itself to become sincerity. Through July 22. (CRG, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-229-2766.)

Short List

SOPHIE CALLE: Cooper, 534 W. 21st St. 212-255-1105. Through July 22. **SAM EASTERSON:** Cooney, 511 W. 25th St. 212-255-8158. Through June 30. **SARAH SZE:** Boesky, 535 W. 22nd St. 212-680-9889. Through July 1.

DANCE

AMERICAN BALLET THEATRE
Two story ballets fill the week; the swashbuckling "Le Corsaire" (based on the poem "The Corsaire," by Lord Byron) and "Swan Lake," set to Tchaikovsky's wondrous score. ♦ June 27-28 and June 30 at 8 and June 29 at 2 and 8: "Le Corsaire." July 1 and July 4-5 at 8 and July 2 at 2 and 8: "Swan Lake." (Metropolitan Opera House, Lincoln Center. 212-362-6000. Through July 16.)

BATTLEWORKS
For several years, the choreographer (and former Parsons dancer) Robert Battle has been turning heads with occasionally playful, always musical dances. In a program that includes two world premières, Battle's three-year-old company displays its versatility. "Overture" is an intimate Bach piece, while "Promenade" is a dysfunctional high-society folk dance, performed with live accompaniment by the chamber quartet Antares. (Dance Theatre Workshop, 219 W. 19th St. 212-924-0077. June 28 at 7 and June 29-July 2 at 7:30.)

CIRQUE ÉLOIZE
The troupe from Quebec eschews animals and greasepaint in favor of high-flying stunts and surreally beautiful images. Its latest spectacle, "Rain," set on a vaudeville-era stage, offers plenty of both. (New Victory, 209 W. 42nd St. 212-239-6200. June 29 at 1 and 7, June 30 at 7, July 2 at 2 and 8, and July 3 at 3. Through July 10.)

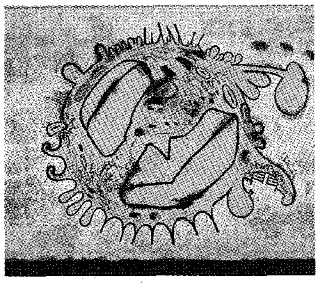
"BEAT IT"
In an unapologetically pop-culture-minded performance piece that takes place over the course of eight days, the choreographer Erin McMonagle and the featured dancers Aaron Mattocks and Annie Weinberg teach the steps to the 1984 Michael Jackson video "Beat It" to any and all comers. On July 4, all the week's participants are invited to join in a grand finale, presenting the dance en masse at 2—after the close of the day's lesson. (Chashama, 217 E. 42nd St. No tickets necessary. June 29-July 1 from noon to 7, July 2-3 from 10 A.M. to 6, and July 4 from 10 A.M. to 2.)

"TAP CITY"
After four years at the Duke on 42nd Street, the New York City Tap Festival moves downtown to the larger quarters of the Joyce, in Chelsea. The festival director,

CRITIC'S NOTEBOOK
BRAVE NEW WORLD

Today's look in more or less abstract picture-making is big, sprawling, and so incredibly busy that a convulsive return to less-is-more may be coming, and none too soon. "Remote Viewing (Invented Worlds in Recent Painting and Drawing)"—the title refers to a high-quack mode of E.S.P.—fills the third floor of the Whitney Museum with excursions in brainy horror vacui by eight mostly local artists, from the overqualified veterans Terry Winters and Carroll Dunham to younger types like Julie Mehretu, Matthew Ritchie, and Alexander Ross. Maps, architecture, computers, and assorted sciences are invoked, along with "virtual reality, the deep unconscious"—whatever that may be—"nomadic travels, and public space." Sorting out the good (or sincerely wacky) from the bad (or frivolously solemn) is hard work, given the prevailing conditions of information overload, which, like video games, seem geared to road-testing the nervous systems of teen-agers. The colors run to the grim, screechy, and otherwise militantly ugly. The over-all effect suggests frenetic depression, mental energies dedicated to forfending thought.

—*Peter Schjeldahl*



CARROLL DUNHAM, "SOLAR ERUPTION," 2000-01

Tony Waag, has collapsed the multiple categories of previous years into two programs: "Tap All-Stars/Tap Internationals," on July 1 at 8 and July 3 at 2; and "Tap Masters, Mentors, Divas and Legends," on June 30 and July 2 at 8 and July 3 at 7:30. The scrambled lineup makes for a rich variety-show mix of world-class tapping: soloists and ensembles, seasoned masters and hungry upstarts, dancers from Japan and dancers from down the block. The season concludes with a youth program on July 2 at 3. (175 Eighth Ave., at 19th St. 212-242-0800.)

MARK FOEHRINGER DANCE PROJECT
The San Francisco-based group presents the New York première of "Diadorim" (Portuguese dialect for "little devil"), a dance-theatre piece about a band of outlaws in the Brazilian backlands, their vengeful leader, Riobaldo, and Diadorim—the woman who loves him. Set to music by Villa-Lobos, Egberto Gismonti, and others. (Joyce SoHo, 155 Mercer St. 212-334-7479. June 30-July 3 at 8.)

"LIMELIGHT"
A large-scale dance choreographed by Monica Bill Barnes and set to music by the Supremes takes place at lunchtime in the shallow pool of the fountain in the public park at Bowling Green, between Broadway and Beaver Street. The performance is part of the free, site-specific Sitelines 2005 summer series presented by the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council. (June 27-July 1 at 12:30 and 1:15.)

OUT OF TOWN

JACOB'S PILLOW
Martha Graham Dance Company performs in the Ted Shawn Theatre, while the Australian troupe Chunky Move presents "Tense Dave" (fresh from its New York première) in the smaller Doris Duke Studio Theatre. Before Graham formed her own company, in 1926, she was a dancer with Denishawn, the troupe led by Ruth St. Denis and the Pillow's founder, Ted Shawn. Now, in a program created specially for the Pillow, the Graham company presents rare works by those mentors, along with a reconstruction of "Flute of Krishna," an early Graham piece made in her predecessors' Orientalist mode, which hasn't been performed in almost eighty years. Classics from Graham's later style fill out the evening. (Becket, Mass. 413-243-0745. Ted Shawn Theatre: June 29-July 1 at 8, July 2 at 2 and 8, and July 3 at 2. Doris Duke Studio: June 30-July 1 at 8:15, July 2 at 2:15 and 8:15, and July 3 at 5.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
CONCERTS IN TOWN

MANHATTAN CHAMBER ORCHESTRA
When Richard Auldon Clark conducts his ensemble in its latest concert, one important person will be missing from the stage—the beloved pianist Ruth Laredo, who was scheduled to perform and who died in May. The musicians will persevere with a short program of works by Dvořák and Brahms, offered in her honor. (Trinity Church, Broadway at Wall St. June 30 at 1. No tickets required.)

NEW YORK PHILHARMONIC: "SUMMERTIME CLASSICS"
Bramwell Tovey, an engaging British conductor (and raconteur) who has established a beachhead at the Philharmonic in the last few years, leads the orchestra in a series of light-classical concerts that bridge the gap between the profundities of the regular season and the plein-air pleasures of the parks concerts. June 30 at 7:30 and July 1 at 8: The pianist Marc-André Hamelin, renowned for his efforts in both contemporary music and at the obscure edges of the classical repertory, makes his Philharmonic début in two works by Liszt ("Totentanz" and "Mephisto Waltz") on "A Little Nightmare Music," a program that also features favorites by Bach (Stokowski's arrangement of the Toccata and Fugue in D Minor), Mussorgsky, and Dukas ("The Sorcerer's Apprentice"). ♦ July 2 at 8 and July 3 at 5: In "New York, New York," a clutch of first-desk players—the trumpeter Philip Smith, the clarinettist Stanley Drucker, and the English-horn player Thomas Stacy—lend their gifts to such works as Leroy Anderson's "Bugler's Holiday," Copland's "Quiet City," and Bernstein's "Prelude, Fugue, and Riffs." (Avery Fisher Hall. 212-875-5656.)

OUT OF TOWN

CARAMOOR FESTIVAL
Michael Barrett's elegant Westchester music festival hits its stride with an appealing variety of concerts. June 30 at 7:30: "Extreme Chamber Music," a new series, begins with a performance by Worlds Beyond, a trio led by the Swiss jazz saxophonist and composer Daniel Schnyder, which will offer music by Schnyder, Weill (a suite from "The Threepenny Opera"), and Gershwin. ♦ July 1 at 8: "The Three Legacies of Johann Sebastian Bach," another new series, begins with "The Private Bach," an evening in which the Jacques Thibaud Trio explores several of the Six Adagios and Fugues and the complete Goldberg Variations (arranged by Mozart and Dmitri Sitkovetsky, respectively). ♦ July 2 at 8: In "I Can't Do It Alone!," Barrett conducts the Orchestra of St. Luke's in a celebration of the songwriting teams of George and Ira Gershwin, Kander and Ebb, Rodgers and Hammerstein, and others, with a quartet of classical and Broadway artists (including Jennifer Alymer and Jason Graae) on vocals. ♦ July 3 at 4:30: An all-Mozart program with the Brentano String Quartet includes the chamber version of the Piano Concerto in F Major, K. 413 (with Ignat Solzhenitsyn), and the String Quintet in C Major, K. 515 (with the violist Maria Lambros). (Katonah, N.Y. 914-232-1252.)

GLIMMERGLASS OPERA
There isn't a more powerfully intimate way to experience opera in the Northeast than at the Alice Busch Opera Theatre, where the company offers the first two of its four summer operas in repertory this week. June 30 and July 1 at 8: Tim Albery, a director who knows how to go deep without going too far, teams up with the conductor Stewart Robertson, the company's music director, for **"Così Fan Tutte."** Anne-Sophie Duprels, Sandra Piques Eddy, John Tessier, and Palle Knudsen sing the roles of the confused young lovers; Camille Zamora is Despina; and Sanford Sylvan is Don Alfonso. ♦ July 1 at 8 and July 3 at 2: Beatrice Jona Affron, in her Glimmerglass début, conducts **"Lucie de Lammermoor,"** Donizetti's dramatically incisive French version of his celebrated "Lucia." Lillian Groag directs a cast that includes Sarah Coburn (in the title role), Raúl Hernández, Earle Patriarco, and Craig Phillips. (Cooperstown, N.Y. 607-547-2255.)

ASTON MAGNA
The noted early-music group, a staple of the Berkshires-Hudson Valley summer scene for three decades, offers "Cupid's Final Folly," a performance featuring Sebastian Durón's zarzuela "Salir el Amor del Mundo," in the first of six concerts at Bard College's Olin Hall. The singers include Roberta Anderson, Nancy Armstrong, and Laurie Monahan; the violinist Daniel Stepner leads the ensemble. (Annandale-on-Hudson, N.Y. 845-758-7425. July 1 at 8. Note: Each concert is repeated in Great Barrington, Massachusetts, on the following evening at 5. For information, call 800-875-7156.)

TANGLEWOOD
The preëminent summer classical series begins its whirl of concerts. July 1 at 8:30: The Juilliard String Quartet, the quintessentially smart and trenchant New York chamber group, brings its distinguished sounds to Ozawa Hall for an evening of quartets by Haydn, Bartók (No. 5), and Dvořák (the "American"). ♦ July 3 at 8:30: Kurt Masur leads the Tanglewood Music Center Orchestra (made up of the world's finest student players) in music by Prokofiev (the "Classical" Symphony), Dutilleux, and Beethoven (the Symphony No. 7). (Lenox, Mass. 800-274-8499.)

MAVERICK CONCERTS
July 2 at 6: Alexander Platt, the Maverick's enterprising music director, is devoting several of this summer's concerts to commemorating the work of the flutist and conductor Georges Barrère, a powerful figure in the series' early history, and the early-twentieth-

century New York composer Charles Tomlinson Griffes, an underrated Romantic modernist. Mei-Ting Sun, the winner of the Inaugural Yamaha Piano e-Competition, performs the first of them, combining Griffes's "Three Tone-Pictures" with music by Chopin, Debussy (the "Préludes," Book I), Cowell, and Scriabin (the Third Sonata). ♦ July 3 at 3: The Rossetti String Quartet and the pianist Ursula Oppens make an odd pair: they're laid-back California sensualists; she's an ultradisciplined New York pro. But somehow it works. They team up to offer a program of Debussy, Beethoven (the "Harp" Quartet), and Elgar (the magisterial Piano Quintet). (Woodstock, N.Y. For more information, call 845-679-8217.)

THE WEEKEND OF CHAMBER MUSIC
This little festival, tucked away in Sullivan County, has two guiding spirits this summer: its founder, the British flutist Judith Pearce, and her friend, the noted British composer Nicholas Maw, who is turning seventy. His work will be celebrated in three concerts; the first, which will pair his "Roman Canticle" (a setting of a poem by Browning) with music by Debussy, features the baritone Aaron Engebreth and the harpist Susan Jolles. (Hortonville Presbyterian Church, Hortonville, N.Y. 845-932-8414. July 2 at 8.)

MOHAWK TRAIL CONCERTS
A mix of international stars and local favorites appear on this enduring concert series, founded thirty-six years ago by the violinist and composer Arnold Black. The flutist Carol Wincenc, along with the soprano Margaret Hunter and a string ensemble led from the harpsichord by Gregory Hayes, opens the season with "Bach, Baroque, and Beyond," a concert featuring works by the Leipzig master (selections from the Orchestral Suite No. 2 in B Minor and several arias) as well as such modern composers as Messiaen, Villa-Lobos, and Joan Tower. (Federated Church, Charlemont, Mass. 888-682-6873. July 2 at 8.)

MUSIC MOUNTAIN
This esteemed annual series, held in an acoustically crisp shoebox hall, hosts a performance by the Blair String Quartet, who offer quartets by Beethoven and Ravel along with Dohnányi's Piano Quintet in C Minor (with William Ransom). (Falls Village, Conn. 860-824-7126. July 3 at 3.)

MOVIES OPENING

THE BEAT THAT MY HEART SKIPPED
Reviewed this week in The Current Cinema. Opening July 1. (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

A DECENT FACTORY
Thomas Balmès's documentary investigates the working conditions of the Chinese women employed by Nokia's suppliers. In English, Finnish, and Chinese. Opening June 29. (Film Forum.)

MODIGLIANI
Andy Garcia stars in a bio-pic about the artist. Directed by Mick Davis. Opening July 1. (Angelika Film Center.)

REBOUND
In a comedy directed by Steve Carr, Martin Lawrence plays a college basketball coach who is relegated to coaching a junior-high team when he loses his job. Opening July 1. (In wide release.)

SEX, POLITICS & COCKTAILS
In his search for someone to love, a Cuban-American filmmaker in Hollywood questions his sexuality, in a comedy directed by Julien Hernandez, who also stars. Opening July 1. (Quad Cinema.)

TROPICAL MALADY
Reviewed below in Now Playing. Opening June 29. (IFC Center.)

UNDEAD
Michael and Peter Spierig wrote and directed this horror film, about zombies who suddenly invade an Australian fishing town. Opening July 1. (In wide release.)

WAR OF THE WORLDS
Steven Spielberg directed this update of the H. G. Wells novel, about a Martian invasion of Earth. With Tom Cruise, Dakota Fanning, and Tim Robbins. Opening June 29. (In wide release.)

THE WORLD
Jia Zhangke's drama about young people who live and work in Beijing's World Park, a real-life tourist destination that is like a cross between Las Vegas and Epcot Center. In Mandarin. Opening July 1. (Cinema Village.)

NOW PLAYING

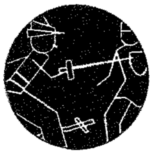
BATMAN BEGINS
And ends with a whimper. Christopher Nolan, working with a screenplay that he wrote with David S. Goyer, has attempted a literal-minded myth of creation. The orphaned young Bruce Wayne (a gloomy Christian Bale) undergoes an initiation in some nameless Asian snow-capped mountains, where he's trained by a morally ambiguous adjunct (Liam Neeson) to a shadowy ninja vigilante leader (Ken Watanabe). The screenplay sounds as if it were written after a course in self-realization taken on Santa Monica Boulevard, and the direction is both pompous and cheesy, with ridiculous plot developments and lots of whirling movement shot so close that we can't really see anything. Gotham is no longer a malignant paradise of evil; it's just dark. With Morgan Freeman and Michael Caine wasted in poorly written roles as Batman's allies.—*David Denby* (Reviewed in our issue of 6/13 & 20/05.) (In wide release.)

BEWITCHED
We are ever more besieged by attempts to turn ancient TV shows into modern movies, many of them disastrously dull. This one, directed by Nora Ephron and co-written with her sister Delia, courageously tries a different tack, and what we end up with is a disaster of another order entirely. Nicole Kidman plays not Samantha (as incarnated for all eternity by Elizabeth Montgomery) but a witch named Isabel, who, having landed in Los Angeles, just happens to win the role of Samantha in a new version of the original series. The point, one imagines, is to confront head-on the conundrum of trying to resurrect the Samantha legend; the result, sadly, is a flurry of in-jokes without the jokes. After a sprightly first ten minutes, the magic simply evaporates from the surface of the film, and one actor after another comes to grief: Will Ferrell overheats as a fading star called Jack, who fancies himself as a Darren *de nos jours*, while Shirley MacLaine is handed the part of Endora and pretty much abandoned to her fate. The only person who cheers you up is Michael Caine, who remains knowingly calm as the chaos descends. A disenchanting spectacle all around.—*Anthony Lane* (6/27/05) (In wide release.)

CINDERELLA MAN
Russell Crowe teams up with the director Ron Howard for the first time since "A Beautiful Mind," and instead of schizophrenia we get broken ribs. This is the story of the boxer James J. Braddock, who fell from favor during the Great Depression, only to claw his way back and snatch the World Heavyweight title in 1935. Crowe lends the character a determined dourness, refusing to turn Braddock's bewildering comeback into a victory parade—a good thing, too, for without that unsmiling restraint the whole saga might sound too good to be true. Anybody whose memory resounds to "Raging Bull," with its bedevilled hero, will feel badly shortchanged by this picture, yet Howard is the right man for stirring simplicity, and his casting is on the money. Braddock's opponents are gratifyingly bisonlike, and Paul Giamatti has a ball in the role of Joe Gould, the trainer who stood by his man. Who would have bet that the grouch of "American Splendor" could end up so natty and, yes, splendid, in a gray plaid suit and tie?—*A.L.* (6/6/05) (In wide release.)

HORSE FEATHERS
The Marx Brothers in one of their niftiest corny-surreal comedies; it isn't in the class of their "Duck Soup," but then what else is? The setting is academic, with emphasis on football; Groucho is Professor Wagstaff, the new president of Huxley College, who explains his policy in the song "Whatever It Is, I'm Against It," and Thelma Todd is the college widow to whom all four brothers make overtures. So

DVD NOTES
MAN OF ACTION



In Steve McQueen's most atypical role, as the larcenous Boston millionaire in Norman Jewison's "The Thomas Crown Affair" (1968), he savored every change in evening wear as if he were Gatsby, and audiences couldn't help falling in love with the pose. There was more than a little truth to that pose: McQueen, like Gatsby, was born in the Midwest, and after a stint in a California reform school and a tour in the Marines he started to make his fortune in the East, on the New York stage. McQueen retooled the American man of action for the mid-twentieth century. He played dangerous games with reflexive grace and was a whiz at handling risky props. He was so completely credible in gritty roles because he made you feel that he had sweat and dust on his neck and behind his ears.

"The Thomas Crown Affair" is part of **"The Steve McQueen Collection"** (M-G-M), a new DVD set that includes McQueen's star-making turn in John Sturges's "The Magnificent Seven," the stirring 1960 Western remake of Kurosawa's "The Seven Samurai." McQueen, as a wily rifleman, steals scenes with a cascade of graceful minimalist gestures, whether he's pumping lead into his gun or adjusting for glare with a cock of his cowboy hat. The set also contains McQueen's superstar-making turn in Sturges's 1963 P.O.W. adventure, "The Great Escape." As one of the few Yankee officers in a Nazi prison camp, McQueen scuttles through the film in a battered flight jacket and a worn sweatshirt. Whether he's banging a baseball against the wall of an isolation cell to keep his sanity or gunning his motorcycle in full view of miles of barbed wire, McQueen is casual, pragmatic, and disrespectful but still very much a hero.

For McQueen's other iconic character, the title role of Peter Yates's bustling "Bullitt" (1968), you need to move on to **"The Essential Steve McQueen Collection"** (Warner Home Video). As Bullitt, McQueen reveals his inner Bogart, playing an idealistic San Francisco police lieutenant with a clipped, sardonic manner. The two sets also demonstrate what a great year McQueen had in 1972 collaborating with Sam Peckinpah: the Warner set contains the super-slick revenge caper "The Getaway," which looks better with every passing decade, and the M-G-M set has "Junior Bonner," in which McQueen plays a past-his-prime rodeo star. He displays just enough of his character's vanity and vestigial power to make his pain and failure sting. His kicked-in-the-ribs saddle tramp ranks with Paul Newman's punch-drunk hockey player in "Slap Shot" as one of the decade's great athletic antiheroes. Whenever McQueen had material this strong, he proved to be an actor down to his bones.

—*Michael Sragow*

there's some naughty sense to it when Groucho sings the picture's theme song to her, "Everyone Says 'I Love You!' " Norman McLeod directed. Released in 1932.—*Pauline Kael* (Film Forum; July 3-4.)

HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE

The latest animated extravaganza by Hayao Miyazaki is not as awe-inspiring as his masterpieces, "Princess Mononoke" and "Spirited Away," but it's still a richly inventive and enchanting delight. The timid Sophie (voiced by Emily Mortimer) falls for a young draft-dodging wizard (Christian Bale), who lives in a great gear-twisting contraption of a castle. When the wicked Witch of the Waste (Lauren Bacall) turns Sophie into an old crone, the movie becomes a series of spell-breaking adventures. Though more languorous and less urgent than it needs to be, the film still has the Monty Python-esque playfulness that is Miyazaki's specialty—it is exquisitely delicate one moment, deliriously hallucinatory the next.—*Bruce Diones* (In wide release.)

LILA SAYS

In sunshiny Marseilles, a gorgeous sixteen-year-old blonde, Lila (Vahina Giocante), comes on to a handsome Arab boy, Chimo (Mohammed Khouas), with the most explicit of enticements. Giocante's face and body respond to the camera as well as the young Brigitte Bardot's did—she's irresistibly, palpably erotic. As she talks dirty, we wonder: is her Lila merely infatuated? A troublemaking fantasist? Chimo, surrounded by jealous and disapproving male friends, hesitates, and we wonder whether he's up to the demands of this strange, dreamy girl, who seems lost in the porno movie playing in her head. Ziad Doueiri's first feature starts well but then runs into the sand. The hero's first-person narration, which apparently worked well on the page (the material originated as a book), turns out to be the most active thing about him. Onscreen, Chimo is an evasive and insubstantial fellow who appears to be looking not for the sexual adventure of a lifetime but for nothing more than a muse.—*D.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Metro Twin.)

MARCH OF THE PENGUINS

The French wildlife filmmaker Luc Jacquet spent more than a year chronicling the course of an emperor-penguin colony in Antarctica, and what he discovered was a touching, self-sacrificing ritual of parenthood. Trekking for miles through stunning ice-castle landscapes, Jacquet frames the penguins' mating cycle—from courtship through the birth and raising of their newborns—as a severe and forbidding ballet that demonstrates the true meaning of survival and determination. Narrated by Morgan Freeman.—*B.D.* (Angelika Film Center and Lincoln Plaza Cinemas.)

ME AND YOU AND EVERYONE WE KNOW

Miranda July, who functions not just as the writer and director of her début but also as the star, plays an artist named Christine—hazy, shy, benign, and very possibly deranged. She falls for a shoe salesman (John Hawkes), who is recently separated and supposed to be caring for his two young sons. The elder boy (Miles Thompson) is seduced, and half humiliated, by a pair of underage girls; the younger (Brandon Ratcliff) logs onto pornographic chat rooms on the Internet. There is much distance and disaffection on parade, and we are meant to take it as coolly and uncomplainingly as the characters do, but that presumption rankles. There is, in fact, much to dislike here, and, for all the skill of the child actors, no amount of tidy payoffs can dispel the air of unpleasantness. In other areas, the movie is more relaxed, and some of the scruffy, shining cityscapes are a sorrowful joy to behold; whether you admire the outcome depends on whether you like the kind of picture in which the most spiritually urgent tribute is paid to a dead fish.—*A.L.* (6/27/05) (IFC Center.)

MR. AND MRS. SMITH

Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, a married couple who work as professional killers, are unhappy in bed, so they warm each other up by firing machine guns, Glocks, and God knows what else at each other at point-blank range and then kicking each other in the groin. When you see it, you understand why the rest of the world thinks Americans are crazy. Doug Liman, the young director who began his career making nifty independent movies like "Swingers" and "Go," now apparently believes that if violence is insouciant and zippy and meaningless it will be taken as the latest in sophisticated fun. Jolie, turning her head sideways and dropping her eyelids, looks great, but what she does in this movie is more like voguing than acting, and Pitt's voice is so toneless and inexpressive that it's frequently inaudible. Written by Simon Kinberg.—*D.D.* (6/13 & 20/05) (In wide release.)

MY SUMMER OF LOVE

In Pawel Pawlikowski's dreamy tale of nubile sixteen-year-old girls in lush, sunny Yorkshire, Mona (Natalie Press) lives above a pub and couldn't be lonelier, or more disgusted with her brother, Phil (Paddy Considine), for his born-again Christian fervor. When cool, refined Tamsin (Emily Blunt) appears on the moors on a white steed and takes Mona to her summer estate, the girls show off their respective talents—Tamsin for (mis)quoting philosophers and playing the cello flawlessly, Mona for channelling the experienced woman she will one day become. As they engage in the cruel tricks typical of teen-age girls, Tamsin keeps Mona at a sly distance while seducing her easily. Press, who looks like a young Sissy Spacek, and Blunt, with her impervious liquid stare, are terrific. The natural moments between them, which transcend the labored repentant-brother subplot, capture the thrill of finding a person who makes you feel like there is no one as smart, funny, or good-looking as the two of you.—*Shauna Lyon* (In wide release.)

STAR WARS—EPISODE III: REVENGE OF THE SITH

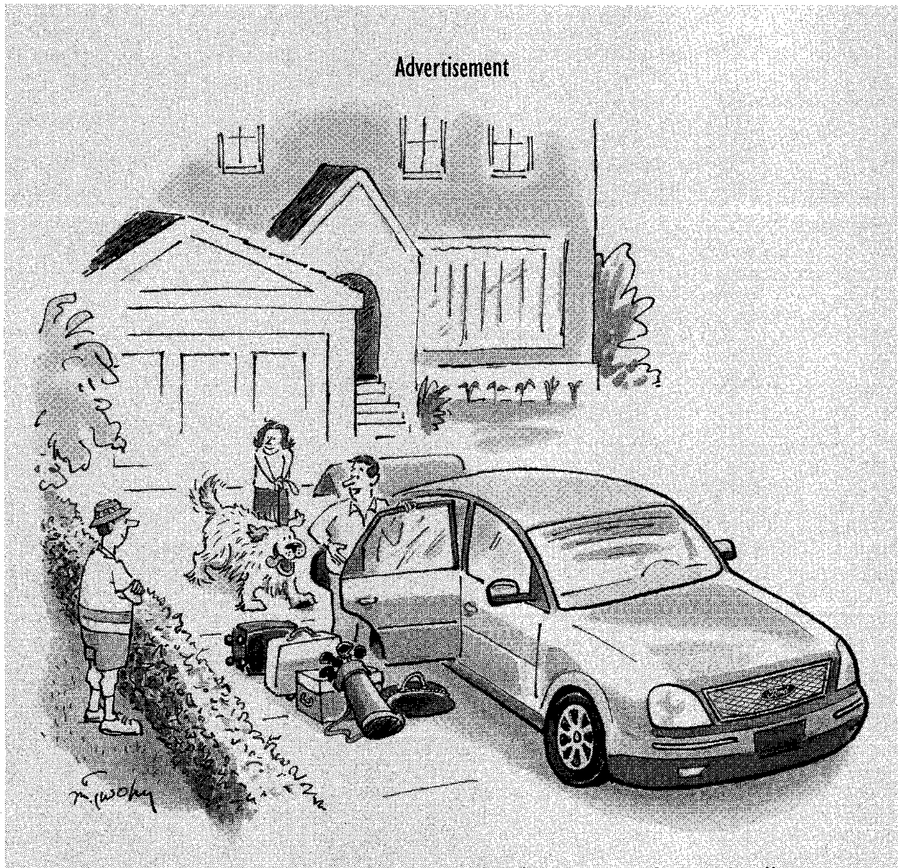
That's all, folks. After five front-line reports from a galaxy far, far away, George Lucas has come to the end of his tale—or, rather, gone back to where he began. For devotees, it will signal a fond and snuffling farewell, as they bid adieu to a vast parade of clones, Ewoks, Darths, tragic hair styles, noble knights, and strangely fastidious androids. For the rest of us, there will be nothing but inexpressible relief. Hayden Christensen plays Anakin Skywalker, who is increasingly lured toward what he calls the dark side and what the rest of us would call frowning. Aiding him is the corrupt Palpatine (Ian McDiarmid), the Chancellor of the Republic, while those trying to thwart our hero's crossover include his pregnant wife (Natalie Portman) and, of course, Obi-Wan Kenobi (Ewan McGregor), who is himself thwarted by an unspeakable British accent. There are frantic duels, murderous dialogue, and a final, fetishistic transformation of trashed Jedi into evil lord, but the suspicion remains that Lucas has left deep space a far shallower place than he found it.—*A.L.* (5/23/05) (In wide release.)

TROPICAL MALADY

The Thai director Apichatpong Weerasethakul films with quiet care the slowly awakening love of a cool, composed soldier, Keng (Banlop Lomnoi), and an uneducated country boy, Tong (Sakda Kaewbuadee). The tenderness of their growing bond is palpable and their shy desire is sketched with sweet humor, yet their relationship is beset by a frustrating tacitness. The director has a fine eye for the textures of a burgeoning city, which seems good for one thing: sexual freedom—a liberating anonymity that is also alienating. The film's second part, a ghost story in the forest, with Keng chasing Tong (who has become a shaman reincarnated as a tiger), would be more engaging if it weren't carrying such allegorical baggage. Weerasethakul's images are striking, but calculatedly so, and a little too picturesque to offer real discoveries. It is as if the director had something he wanted to say but is pulling his punches: this is a film of ideas that remain schematic and of sensuality that remains ideal. In Thai.—*Richard Brody* (IFC Center.)

WATTSTAX

Eight years after the Watts riots in 1965, the director Mel Stuart intercut testimony about the state of the hood with musical numbers caught at local sites and a 1972 L.A. Memorial Coliseum concert that celebrated the area's resilience. What emerged was a heady testament to gospel, soul, jazz, funk, and, of course, black pride. (You can spot Ossie Davis and Ruby Dee in the Coliseum audience; Jesse Jackson



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unites the crowd with his chant "I am somebody.") Because of the montage format, the film never finds a satisfying rhythm. But Richard Pryor holds it all together as he riffs for the camera between numbers; in a bold bit of genius he contends that slavery brought the cream of Africa to America, but he also offers startling variations on his trademark depictions of the conning and effrontery summoned up by African-American survival instincts. The profoundly eclectic group of musical stars includes the Staples Singers and Isaac Hayes, Little Milton and Luther Ingram. The showstopper turns out to be Rufus Thomas: the audience spills out onto the playing field when he gets them hopping to the funky chicken. Released in 1973.—*Michael Sragow* (BAM Rose Cinemas; July 2-4.)

YES

Nobody could accuse the British director Sally Potter of repeating herself. Every project has the air of an adventure, and this new one is the riskiest to date. Joan Allen plays a nameless and discontented scientist living in London. Sam Neill plays her sighing cad of a husband, and Simon Abkarian plays the Lebanese surgeon turned chef with whom she falls in love. The story of their trysting is ominously slim, and the final switch of location to Cuba feels like a slightly desperate, if strongly flavored, shot of the exotic. The movie is rife with similar shifts, as the images melt, thaw, and resolve themselves into a variety of textures and tones; what is more, the screenplay is composed wholly in rhyming couplets. These are delivered, and sometimes disguised, with great suppleness, especially by Neill, but they work far better in rushes of wrath and dissent than in the more lyrical moods, and the whole conceit will strike you as either dazzling or vacantly precious, according to taste.—*A.L.* (6/27/05) (First & 62nd Cinemas and Sunshine Cinema.)

Also Playing

CRASH: In wide release (5/2/05). **5 X 2:** Lincoln Plaza Cinemas and Quad Cinema. **HERBIE: FULLY LOADED:** In wide release. **LAND OF THE DEAD:** In wide release. **MADAGASCAR:** In wide release (5/30/05). **MAD HOT BALLROOM:** In wide release. **THE TALENT GIVEN US:** Angelika Film Center.

REVIVALS, CLASSICS, ETC.

Titles with a dagger are reviewed above.

ANTHOLOGY FILM ARCHIVES

32 Second Ave., at 2nd St. (212-505-5181)—♦ Special screenings. June 30 at 7 and July 2-3 at 2: "Star Spangled to Death: Part One" (2004, Ken Jacobs). ♦ July 1-3 at 7: "Star Spangled to Death: Part Two" (2004, Jacobs). ♦ "Storefront Films." July 1 at 7, 8:30, and 10 and July 2-3 at 3:30, 5, 6:30, 8, and 9:30: "Lessons of Darkness" (1992, Werner Herzog; in German, English, and Arabic). ♦ "*The Onion* Presents." June 30 at 8: "Sexy Beast" (2000, Jonathan Glazer).

BAM ROSE CINEMAS

30 Lafayette Ave., Brooklyn (718-636-4100)—"*Village Voice* Best of 2004." June 29 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Harold & Kumar Go to White Castle" (2004, Danny Leiner). ♦ Special screening. June 30 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "Joint Security Area" (2000, Park Chanwook; in Korean). ♦ "Afro-Punk Weekend." July 1 at 2 and July 3 at 9:15: "The Spook Who Sat by the Door" (1973, Ivan Dixon). ♦ July 1 at 4:30 and July 2 at 9:15: "Downtown 81" (1981, Edo Bertoglio). ♦ July 1 and July 3-4 at 6:50 and July 2 at 2: "Afro-Punk" (2003, James Spooner). ♦ July 1 at 9:30 and July 4 at 2: "Wilmington 10, U.S.A. 10,000" (1979, Haile Gerima). ♦ July 2-3 at 4:30 and July 4 at 9:15: "Wattstax" (†). ♦ July 2 at 6:50: "Child of Resistance" (1972, Gerima). ♦ July 3 at 2: "Black Is . . . Black Ain't" (1994, Marlon Riggs). ♦ July 4 at 6:50: "The Murder of Fred Hampton" (1971, Howard Alk). ♦ Through July 28: "After Vigo." July 5 at 4:30, 6:50, and 9:15: "L'Atalante" (1934, Jean Vigo; in French).

FILM FORUM

W. Houston St. west of Sixth Ave. (212-727-8110)—Through July 21: "Paramount Before the Code." June 29 at 2, 4:50, and 7:40: "Island of Lost Souls" (1933, Erle C. Kenton). ♦ June 29 at 3:30, 6:20, and 9: "Murders in the Zoo" (1933, Edward Sutherland). ♦ June 30 at 1, 4:30, and 8: "June Moon" (1931, Sutherland). ♦ June 30 at 2:35, 6:05, and 10: "Follow Thru" (1930, Laurence Schwab and Lloyd Corrigan). ♦ July 1 at 1:30, 4:40, and 7:50: "Kiss and Make Up" (1934, Harlan Thompson). ♦ July 1 at 3:05, 6:15, and 9:25: "This Is the Night" (1932, Frank Tuttle). ♦ July 2 at 1:30, 4:35, and 7:40: "No Man of Her Own" (1932, Wesley Ruggles). ♦ July 2 at 3:10, 6:15, and 9:20: "White Woman" (1933, Stuart Walker). ♦ July 3-4 at 1, 3:55, 6:50, and 9:45: "Duck Soup" (1933, Leo McCarey). ♦ July 3-4 at 2:25, 5:20, and 8:15: "Horse Feathers" (†). ♦ July 5 at 1:10, 4:20, and 7:30: "Pick-Up" (1933, Marion Gering). ♦ July 5 at 2:45, 5:55, and 9:05: "Ladies of the Big House" (1931, Gering).

FLORENCE GOULD HALL

55 E. 59th St. (212-355-6160)—"Occupation of France Series." July 5 at 12:30, 4, and 7: "Children of Paradise" (1945, Marcel Carné; in French).

MUSEUM OF MODERN ART

Roy and Niuta Titus Theatres, 11 W. 53rd St. (212-708-9480)—"Hayao Miyazaki and Isao Takahata: Masters of Animation." June 29 at 6: "Pom Poko" (1994, Takahata). ♦ June 29 at 8:15: "My Neighbors the Yamadas" (1999, Takahata). ♦ June 30 at 8:30: "Princess Mononoke" (1997, Miyazaki). ♦ "112 Years of Cinema." June 29 at 6: "Xiao Wu" (1997, Jia Zhangke; in Mandarin). ♦ June 29 at 8:15 and July 2 at 2: "Hannah and Her Sisters" (1986, Woody Allen). ♦ July 3 at 1 and July 4 at 2: "The Art of Vision" (1965, Stan Brakhage). ♦ Edward Yang films. June 29 at 6: "The Terrorizer" (1986; in Mandarin). ♦ The films of Hanna Schygulla. June 30 at 6: "Werckmeister Harmonies" (2000, Béla Tarr; in Hungarian). ♦ "Miramax: 25 Years." July 1 at 5 and July 2 at 4:30: "Bullets Over Broadway" (1994, Allen). ♦ July 4 at 7: "Mimic" (1997, Guillermo del Toro). ♦ "New Works/New Acquisitions." July 1 at 6: "Russian Ark" (2002, Aleksandr Sokurov; in Russian). ♦ July 1 at 8:15: "Bartleby" (2001, Jonathan Parker). ♦ July 2 at 6:45: "La Trilogie des Amours" (1999-2003, Laurence Attali; in French). ♦ July 2 at 8:30: "Dirty Pretty Things" (2002, Stephen Frears). ♦ July 3 at 5:30: "Painted Fire" (2002, Im Kwon-Taek; in Korean). ♦ Through July 10: "Premiere Brazil!" All films are in Portuguese. July 1 at 2: "Intermissions" (2004, João Moreira Salles). ♦ July 1 at 7:15, July 2 at 4:15, July 3 at 1, and July 4 at 6: "Almost Brothers" (2004, Lúcia Murat). ♦ July 2 at 6:45: "Alô Alô Carnaval" (1936, Adhemar Gonzaga). ♦ July 2 at 8:45: "Playing in the Dark" (2004, Toni Venturi). ♦ July 3 at 3:15: "Cinema, Aspirin, and Vultures" (2004, Marcelo Gomes). ♦ July 3 at 5:15: "Metalworkers" (2004, Eduardo Coutinho). ♦ July 4 at 3:30: "Diary of a Provincial Girl" (2004, Helena Solberg). ♦ July 4 at 8:15: "Estamira" (2004, Marcos Prado).

MUSEUM OF THE MOVING IMAGE

35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria (718-784-0077)—"Asian Cinevisions." July 1 at 7:30: "Keka" (2003, Quark Henares; in Tagalog and Filipino). ♦ "Asian City Films." July 2 at 2: "Suzhou River" (2000, Lou Ye; in Mandarin). ♦ July 2 at 4: "Welcome to Destination Shanghai" (2003, Andrew Cheng Yusu; in Mandarin). ♦ July 3 at 2: "Last Life in the Universe" (2003, Pen-ek Ratanaruang; in Thai, Japanese, and English). ♦ July 3 at 4:30: "Bright Future" (2003, Kiyoshi Kurosawa; in Japanese). ♦ Repertory nights. July 2-3 at 6:30: "Nashville" (1975, Robert Altman).

SUNSHINE CINEMA

143 E. Houston St. (212-330-8182)—Midnight movies. July 1-3: "Fear and Loathing in Las Vegas" (1998, Terry Gilliam).

WALTER READE THEATRE

Lincoln Center (212-875-5600)—Through July 19: "Risks and Reinvention: The Cinema of Louis Malle." June 29 at 2 and 6:15: "The Lovers" (1958; in French). ♦ June 29 at 4:15 and 8:30: "The Silent World" (1956, Jacques-Yves Cousteau and Malle; in French). ♦ June 30 at 2 and 6:30: "A Very Private Affair" (1962; in French). ♦ June 30 at 4:15 and 8:40: "Zazie dans le Métro" (1960; in French). ♦ July 1 at 2 and 6:40 and July 3 at 4:20: "The Fire Within" (1963; in French). ♦ July 1 at 4:15 and 8:50 and July 3 at 8:50: "Viva Maria!" (1965; in French and German). ♦ July 2 at 1: "Phantom India: Part One" (1969; in French). ♦ July 2 at 4:15: "Phantom India: Part Two" (1969; in French). ♦ July 2 at 6:30: "Phantom India: Part Three" (1969; in French). ♦ July 2 at 8:45: "Lacombe, Lucien" (1974; in French, German, and English). ♦ July 3 at 2 and 6:30 and July 5 at 1 and 9: "The Thief of Paris" (1967; in French). ♦ July 4 at 2 and 6:30: "Calcutta" (1969; in French). ♦ July 4 at 4:10 and 8:40: "Murmur of the Heart" (1971; in French).

TABLES FOR TWO
THE MODERN

9 W. 53rd St. (212-333-1220)—In 1918, while visiting Alsace for some postwar relief work, Gertrude Stein had an accident: her car collided with a horse-drawn army kitchen. This episode, all but lost among modernism's more prevalent creation myths, came to mind recently over lunch at Danny Meyer's magnificent new place, in the renovated MOMA. Could it be that in this innocuous fender bender the seeds of the Modern were sown? Alsace, modernity, kitchen: these, anyway, are the base ingredients here. The chef, Gabriel Kreuther, has composed a capacious menu around the cuisine of his home region, although in such a way that suggests a head-on collision between his kitchen and a busload of fusion chefs. Consider the *baekeoffe,* an Alsatian meat stew, served in a little clay pot. Kreuther's consists of lamb, conch, and tripe, an intimidating twist on surf and turf. Warped further by the aioli and cumin on the toast accompaniment, it is as disorienting as much of the art work housed in the galleries upstairs must have seemed in the days of horse-drawn kitchens.

The Modern is actually two restaurants, united by a spare, almost chilly design. One is a semi-frenetic bar café, with smaller servings, lower prices, and smoother skin. This is where you'll find the *baekeoffe.* The other, on the far side of a frosted-glass wall, is a fancy joint with multi-star aspirations and an air, among the patrons, of art ownership. The view into the sculpture garden is occasionally modified by the sight of grandes dames arranging themselves into sculptural combinations—air kisses, motionless eyelids, hard hair. Meanwhile, delicate concoctions arrive under silver warmers. On a recent afternoon the chorizo-crusted cod narrowly edged the spice-crusted sturgeon and sautéed skate in a battle of the fishes, though in the wider aquatic category the truffle-crusted duck breast whomped them all. As Stein wrote in her play "Accents in Alsace. A Reasonable Tragedy": "In the midst of our happiness we were very pleased." (Bar Room open daily for lunch and dinner, entrées $12-$18; the Modern open Mondays through Fridays for lunch and dinner and Saturdays for dinner, prix fixe $78.)

—*Nick Paumgarten*

READINGS AND TALKS

BRYANT PARK READING ROOM
Robert Leuci, the former New York Police Department narcotics officer whose descent into corruption inspired the book and movie "Prince of the City," talks about "All the Centurions," his own version of what happened more than thirty years ago. (Sixth Ave. at 42nd St. For more information, call 212-803-5892. June 29 at 12:30.)

NATIONAL ARTS CLUB
"The Secret Society of Demolition Writers," a new fiction anthology inspired by the free-spirited, risky nature of a demolition derby, features anonymous pieces by Sebastian Junger, Anna Quindlen, Michael Connelly, and other established writers. On June 29 at 7, Marc Parent, the book's editor, and Benjamin Cheever, one of its contributors, read from the collection. (15 Gramercy Park S. No tickets necessary.)

MARK SVENVOLD
Svenvold, who spent a month with tornado chasers in the great plains of Oklahoma and Nebraska, is a poet, but he turned to prose for "Big Weather," his new book about the experience. He reads from it on June 29 at 7. (192 Books, 192 Tenth Ave., at 21st St. For more information, call 212-255-4022.)

EXPLORERS CLUB
The educational nonprofit group Reach the World uses a forty-three-foot sailboat, the Makulu (which is currently in Fiji), and the Internet to connect inner-city kids with other countries and other cultures. On June 29 at 6:30, Heather Halstead, the group's executive director, offers a slide show and a talk about the program. Fifth-grade students from P.S. 170, in the Bronx, will give their perspectives. (46 E. 70th St. 212-628-8383. To track the Makulu, visit www.reachtheworld.org.)

JAMES TOBACK
The director's début feature, "Fingers," about a pianist and petty criminal (played by Harvey Keitel), from 1978, has recently been adapted by the French filmmaker Jacques Audiard as "The Beat That My Heart Skipped." On June 30 at 7 the Museum of the Moving Image will screen both films, starting with "Fingers." In between them, Toback will talk with David Schwartz, the chief curator of film at the museum. (35th Ave. at 36th St., Astoria, Queens. 718-784-4520.)

DAVID SEDARIS
The humorist hosts a reading from "Children Playing Before a Statue of Hercules," an anthology of short stories he edited to benefit 826NYC, a volunteer tutoring organization in Brooklyn. The writer Sarah Vowell is the co-host, and Lorrie Moore, Charles Baxter, Akhil Sharma, Joyce Carol Oates, and other contributors will be on hand. (Great Hall, Cooper Union, 7 E. 7th St. For tickets, call 212-279-4200. July 5 at 8.)

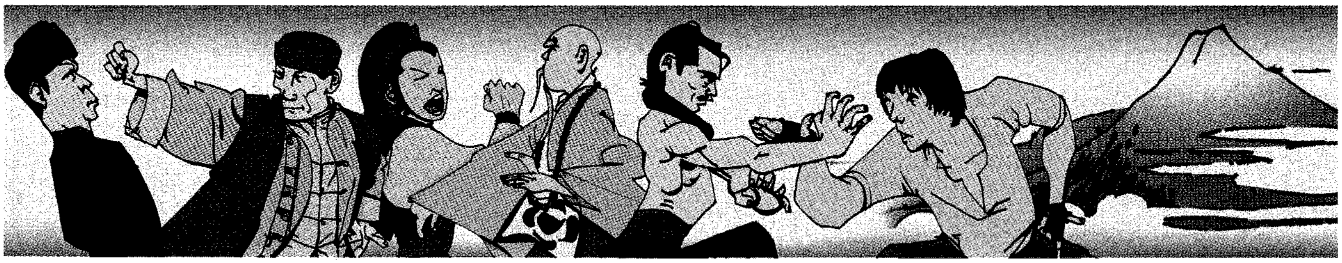
ABOVE AND BEYOND

CIRQUE DU SOLEIL
The Canadian troupe that put the Vegas back in the circus (they actually have four shows at four hotels in Sin City) returns to the metropolitan area with its latest production, "Varekai." (The Meadowlands, East Rutherford, N.J. For more information, call 800-678-5440. June 30-July 24.)

SUNSET ECOTOURS
Since the passage of the Clean Water Act in 1972, herons, egrets, and ibises have begun nesting in large numbers on the islands of New York Harbor. This summer, New York City Audubon offers guided boat rides, passing by Hoffman, Swinburne, and North and South Brother Islands. "It's more than seeing a pigeon," Yigal Gelb, the program director with N.Y.C.A., says. "There's real wildlife in the city—you just have to be smart enough to find it." (July 2 at 7 and every other Saturday through Aug. 13. For more information, call 212-742-1969.)

HOT DOG EATING CONTEST
This annual Independence Day celebration (reportedly in its ninetieth year) is as American as Mom and apple pie, but Americans are hardly the best at it. The current champion, the Japanese superglutton Takeru Kobayashi, ate fifty-three and a half hot dogs and buns in the allotted twelve minutes last year. The closest American, Sonya Thomas, downed only thirty-two. Kobayashi and Thomas will be up against eighteen other competitors from around the globe this year. The winner gets the honor of donning the bejewelled mustard-yellow belt. (Nathan's Famous, corner of Surf and Stillwell Aves., Coney Island. July 4 at noon. For more information, visit www.ifoce.com.)

AUCTIONS AND ANTIQUES
For some fans, **Christie's** sale of the personal effects of Marlon Brando is an offer—or, at least, an opportunity—that can't be refused. The auction, on June 30, will feature more than three hundred objects from Brando's famed Mulholland Drive residence; early lots concentrate on furniture, decorative arts, household objects, and even cars. (A 2003 Lexus is expected to bring up to fifty thousand dollars.) But the most interesting lots come later. In one letter, Jack Kerouac begs Brando to help bring "On the Road" to film. In another, Mario Puzo writes: "I think you're the only actor who can play the Godfather." The insightful marginalia in Brando's working script, also on auction, confirm his rightness for the role. (20 Rockefeller Plaza, at 49th St. 212-636-2000.)



JASHAR AWAN

ON THE HORIZON

THE THEATRE
"SWITCH TRIPTYCH"
July 20-23

The brainy young playwright Adriano Shaplin and his theatre company, the Riot Group, impressed New York audiences last fall with "Pugilist Specialist," a taut drama about U.S. Marines on a black-ops mission in the Middle East. Shaplin's new play is set in 1919 and takes a look at a group of female telephone operators in New York City whose jobs are about to be rendered obsolete by technology. (212-868-4444.)

NIGHT LIFE
LIZ PHAIR
Aug. 1-2

Once the queen of college rock, Phair has taken a number of unexpected turns, most recently into glossy mainstream pop. She has an album due later this year, and she'll perform new material—along with old favorites—in a pair of acoustic shows at Joe's Pub. (212-593-8777.)

CLASSICAL MUSIC
TANGLEWOOD
Aug. 4-8

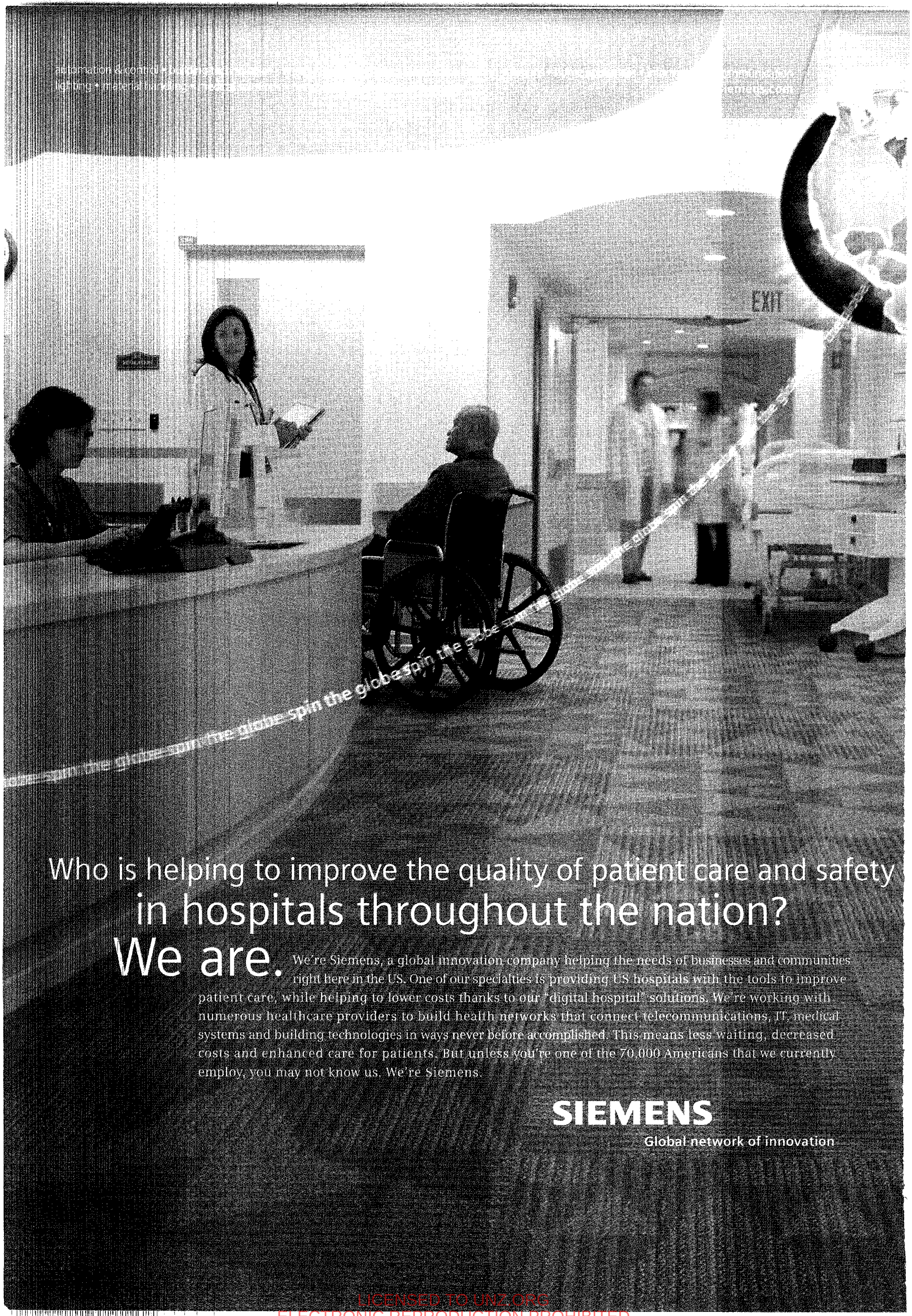
The Festival of Contemporary Music includes performances of pieces by John Harbison and Lee Hyla and of Steven Stucky's Second Concerto for Orchestra, which won the 2005 Pulitzer Prize for Music. (800-274-8499.)

MOVIES
KUNG-FU FIGHTING
Aug. 5-21

The Shaw Brothers, the Hong Kong powerhouse studio that kept a stable of actors and directors employed for decades, is famous for its dozens of kung-fu movies, but it also made dramas, comedies, and musicals. This tribute to the studio, at BAM, includes screenings of the rarely seen "Come Drink with Me," from 1966, and "The Kingdom and the Beauty," from 1959. (718-636-4100.)

ART
"RUSSIA!"
Sept. 16-Jan. 12, 2006

The Guggenheim's gigantic fall show will review nine centuries of Russian art, from twelfth-century religious icons to the inspired contemporary goofs of Komar and Melamid. Stops along the way will include the imperial collections of Peter and Catherine the Great, which introduced Western European secular art to the region, and Soviet socialist realism. (212-423-3500.)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EXIT
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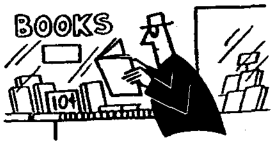
THE NEW YORKER

THE TALK OF THE TOWN

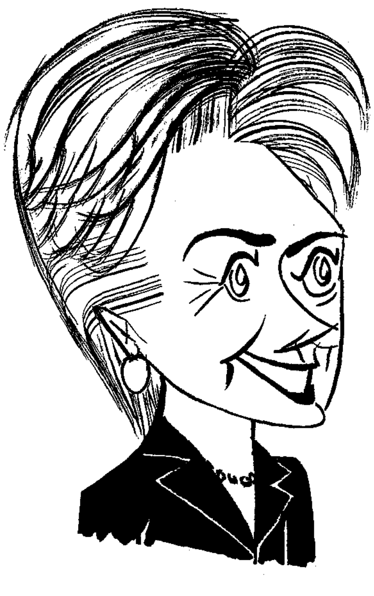
COMMENT
POLITICAL PORN



On the strength of name recognition and a solid freshman term in the Senate, Hillary Clinton appears to lead all other potential candidates for the Presidential nomination of the Democratic Party in 2008. But Senator Clinton cannot become President of the United States. The reason, as her latest pornographer, Edward Klein, makes plain, is the lesbian situation. It is entirely possible, Klein allows, that the junior senator from New York is not herself a Sapphic practitioner. But she imbibed the "culture of lesbianism" as an undergraduate at Wellesley College in the nineteen-sixties; she has certainly *known* a few lesbians in her time (many names are unearthed); she definitely read a Methodist magazine called *motive* that published, among others, Rita Mae Brown, the author of a "lesbian novel"; and once, at a White House reunion of her Wellesley classmates, she rubbed the "butch cut" hairdo of one Nancy Wanderer, remarking, lesbianically, "Maybe I'll get a haircut like this and really shock everyone."

Reading "The Truth About Hillary," one can easily envision Klein's well-appointed desk in mid-composition, an antique lamp casting a lambent beam on his files of political smut. The evidence of Senator Clinton's moral turpitude (beginning, but not ending, with her contact with known lesbians) is girded by a historian's sense of enterprise—interviews with disgruntled West Wing footmen, gratuitous political "analysts," and the "clinical sexologist" Dr. Claudia Six. And the craft? Ask yourself whether Samuel Eliot Morison could reel off sentences on the order of "But Hillary's celestial ambitions were thwarted by a catch-22."

And so "The Truth About Hillary" has, despite critical demurral on both the left and the right, been launched into the upper reaches of the Amazon best-seller list, where it now does lonely battle with "1776," "Freakonomics," and advance orders for "Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince." Unlike the disgruntled G-men, disgraced pollsters, and spurned lounge chanteuses who usually write these books, Klein is said not to be an interested party. He is not an ideologue. He is an experienced freelancer, a former editor of the *Times Magazine* and a former foreign editor of *Newsweek*. He begins his story with a White House butler making his way across the West Sitting Room to an eat-in kitchen where "the Big Girl"—a staff nickname for the First Lady, we are informed—and the President take their breakfast. Then, in lieu of cornflakes, we are served a bowl of innuendo:



> Few of the downstairs staff in the West Wing knew what went on inside that bedroom, and as a result, there was always a great deal of water-cooler gossip. . . .
>
> *Was it true they slept in separate beds?*
>
> *Were there any telltale signs on the presidential sheets that they ever had sex with each other?*
>
> *For that matter, did the Big Girl have any interest in sex with a man?*
>
> *Or, as was widely rumored, was she a lesbian?*

Throughout, Klein's obsession with the girl-on-girl theme is equal to anything in "The Well of Loneliness" or on "The Howard Stern Show." Take a passage in which Hillary, while still a student at Wellesley, is dating a young man named David Rupert. "Their testy discussions about skiing—which might have been a substitute for an honest discussion about Hillary's sexual frigidity—often ended with Hillary retreating into an icy silence." Hillary, if you follow, was not much for *skiing*. "Skiing." "Frigidity." "Icy." Say no more.

Klein does not disguise his motiva-

ILLUSTRATIONS BY TOM BACHTELL

tion. "What I do for a living is write popular nonfiction and the more popular it is the more books I sell and the more money I make," he told *Salon*. The book's publisher is Sentinel, a conservative imprint of Penguin, and its publicity material announces a more complicated ambition: "Just as the Swift Boat Veterans convinced millions of voters that John Kerry lacked the character to be president, Klein's book will influence everyone who is sizing up the character of Hillary Clinton."

If Senator Clinton does make a run for the White House, there will be every reason to size up her character, along with her grasp of policy, her record on health care, her work in the Senate. There will be reasons to ask, as well, how we can continue to instruct the world in democratic processes when we are moving toward a system of popularly elected dynasties, an alternation of the House of Bush and the House of Clinton, which then lectures the House of Saud. But "The Truth About Hillary" is just the latest installment in an obsession that has the Starr Report as its Parnassus, and has revived the eighteenth-century genre of political pornography, in which the woman of power gets her comeuppance. Marie-Antoinette, who was thought to have undue influence on Louis XVI, was the subject of countless lewd pamphlets, complete with explicit engravings, falsely depicting her sexual relations with, among others, her son, her valet, the King's brother, and the Duchess of Polignac.

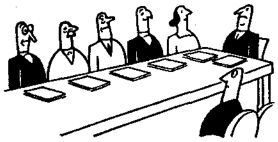
Klein's book lacks both the imagination and the engravings of its Jacobin forebears, and it may seem foolish to engage it or its author. In better times, in a better world, the shoddiness of its reporting and the vulgarity of its writing would place it safely beyond discussion. In our own time and place, though, such books are not only published but sell in the hundreds of thousands, and their toxicity has a habit of further poisoning the political groundwater. In the last election cycle, the Kerry campaign was slow to recognize the importance of the Swift Boat slander, and, by the time it did, the damage could not be undone.

Bill O'Reilly, among others on the right, has been as dismissive of this latest Hillary book as he was of Kitty Kelley's trash biography of the Bush family. Dick Morris, the consultant who has never forgiven the Clintons for casting him out, has also slammed the new book, but for tactical reasons: personal attack, he says, will "just empower the woman." In *The Hill*, he writes, "Criticize Hillary all you want. But let's stay within the foul lines, shall we?"

Morris defined the foul lines in January, 1998, when he said, on KABC talk radio, "What I'm about to say isn't necessarily a fact. . . . But let's assume, O.K., that his [Bill Clinton's] sexual relationship with Hillary is not all it's supposed to be. Let's assume that some of the allegations about Hillary sometimes not necessarily being into regular sex with men might be true." You can see the difference. Morris's contribution to the literature, "Condi vs. Hillary: The Next Great Presidential Race," will be published by Regan Books in October.

—*David Remnick*

SUMMER JOBS
THE ENRON EXAMPLE



When questions of ambiguous morality arise, and no life is immune to them, a person in turmoil might turn for guidance to the Enron Code of Ethics, published in July of 2000 and, regrettably, now out of print. The Enron Code of Ethics is sixty-two pages long and includes two blank pages for notes and a foreword by Kenneth L. Lay, who was then the company's chairman. "Enron's reputation finally depends on its people, on you and me," he wrote. "Let's keep that reputation high." In consulting the Code, any seeker must necessarily bear in mind that no volume of wisdom can answer all questions, soothe all strife, or settle all waters, that moral choices frequently depend on the complexities of any given situation, and, finally, that, as Enron specifies, in the section titled "How to Use This Booklet," "the Company reserves the right to amend, alter, and terminate policies at any time."

The view that all personal growth proceeds from suffering might have figured in any revision of the Code, since Lay has had his own experience to brood upon. Among the thousands of people who have been impoverished by the company's collapse, left without work, with their hopes and futures in ashes, no one, Lay says, was more harmed than he. As proof, he has observed that he was once worth three hundred million dollars, and now he has less than twenty million. Lay made these possibly imprudent remarks at a meeting with the press which is included in the recent documentary film about Enron, "The Smartest Guys in the Room." A few weeks ago, a lawyer in New York named Edwin Matthews saw the movie and thought that it might be edifying to arrange a screening for his firm's summer associates. Mr. Matthews is a lawyer at Coudert Brothers.

The screening took place at a theatre on Houston Street. About thirty associates attended, more or less everyone whose work hadn't kept him in the office. Afterward, they gathered in a room off the second-floor lobby. The associates sat at little round café tables on red plastic chairs. The expressions on their faces were attentive and earnest. Several had the pallid complexions emblematic of sportsmen of the great indoors.

Matthews stood to address them. He is about seventy, and tall and thin. He made some remarks. He asked some questions. "Suppose your firm represents Enron, and I'm a partner and I ask you to research whether cornering the power market in California is legal," he said. "You give me a memo saying it's illegal, and suppose I don't do anything with it. Suppose I give it to Enron, and *they* don't do anything with it. In your careers, you are going to see situations where your clients are not going to do the right thing. Ask yourselves what would you do, because everyone answered that question wrong at Enron."

If the associates at Coudert Brothers are representative, the lawyers of tomorrow appear to be well-meaning but uneasy with ambiguities. "If you're involved as part of an ongoing fraud, I can't see how you don't go out of your way to do something about it," a young man said. "But, in the situation here, it's kind of murky. What if the advice I'm giving might not be illegal but clearly contradicts the law, and it might mean the client gets away with it. Is the role of a lawyer to guide your client in a way that works for a public good—is it something akin to public office—or are you supposed to advance his interest?"

"You're not a policeman," Matthews said. "But you are an officer of the court."

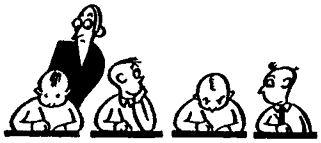
Another associate said that when he wrote a memo and gave it to his superior he assumed that whatever the man did with it was the correct thing to do. A third said ruefully that the law wasn't always clear about how aggressive you could be in order to make money. Another concluded a long question by shaking his head and staring at the floor. "I guess I'm not making myself clear," he said.

Matthews told the associates that in the absence of legal guidance they had to consult their conscience. And that, if they knew that their client intended to do something wrong, "your obligation to keep matters confidential is overwhelmed by your knowledge of a future crime." As a closer, he produced a copy of the Enron Code of Ethics, provided by a young man who had worked for a company that Enron had bought and who now worked at Coudert. Each associate passed the Code to another.

According to an entry on page 60, any violations of company ethics were to be reported to "the Office of the Chairman of the Company, at (713) 853-7294." If you call that number now, a recording of a young woman with the voice of a schoolteacher says, "You have reached a nonworking number at Enron."

—*Alec Wilkinson*

DEPT. OF EDUCATION
DON'T LAUGH



The problem of antisocial behavior among the young has become so prevalent in Britain that a Blair official recently proposed forcing miscreants to wear bright-orange jumpsuits. New York City, on the other hand, seems to prefer, in these post-Giuliani years, to be an avatar of positive reinforcement: the esteem-affirming Athens to London's hard-nosed Sparta. Over the course of the next year, the Department of Education will introduce into all of its elementary and middle schools "Operation Respect: Don't Laugh at Me," an intensive curriculum in character development. The program, which is the brainchild and heart's desire of Peter Yarrow, of Peter, Paul & Mary, aims to combat bullying by emphasizing the moral lessons of folk music.

"Don't Laugh at Me" (or DLAM) was born when Yarrow—a veteran of the civil-rights, gender-equality, nuclear-disarmament, peace, and Amtrak-subsidization movements—heard a country ballad of that name at the Kerrville Folk Festival, in the summer of 1999. Moved to tears by its swelling harmonies and first-person testaments to the effects of ridicule—"I'm a little boy with glasses, the one they call a geek / A little girl who never smiles 'cause I've got braces on my teeth"—he decided to incorporate the tune into Peter, Paul & Mary's repertoire. At a gig with the National Association of Elementary School Principals, the group played the song. "The principals gave a tremendous response to it, and said, 'We need this in our schools,'" Chic Dambach, Operation Respect's president and C.E.O., said the other day. "And Peter, being the activist and the organizer that he is, said, 'You won't just have a song but a whole program.'" DLAM is now used in at least twelve thousand American schools and camps.

A couple of Tuesdays ago, at a fusty Department of Education building in Brooklyn, Lynne Hurdle-Price and Mark Weiss, conflict-resolution experts, led a DLAM training session for about two dozen middle-school teachers, whom they divided into five groups. "I want you all to share a time in your career as an educator where someone did or said something that made you feel like you were not cared for or respected," Hurdle-Price said. Each teacher spent three minutes sharing. "Now do the opposite." Hurdle-Price distributed paper and Magic Markers. She asked each group to draw an outline of a human figure, inscribing negative behaviors ("put-downs") on the outside and positive behaviors ("put-ups") on the inside, close to the heart. Each group then presented its finished product, a Caring Being, which, according to the DLAM teacher's guide, would help the participants to "explore creating agreements around behaviors."

"This is Mr. Smith," one teacher said, holding up an illustration of a man with a porkpie hat and a handful of flowers.

Weiss unfurled a poster of a human outline embellished with Chinese characters and said, "This is Caring Being in Cantonese."

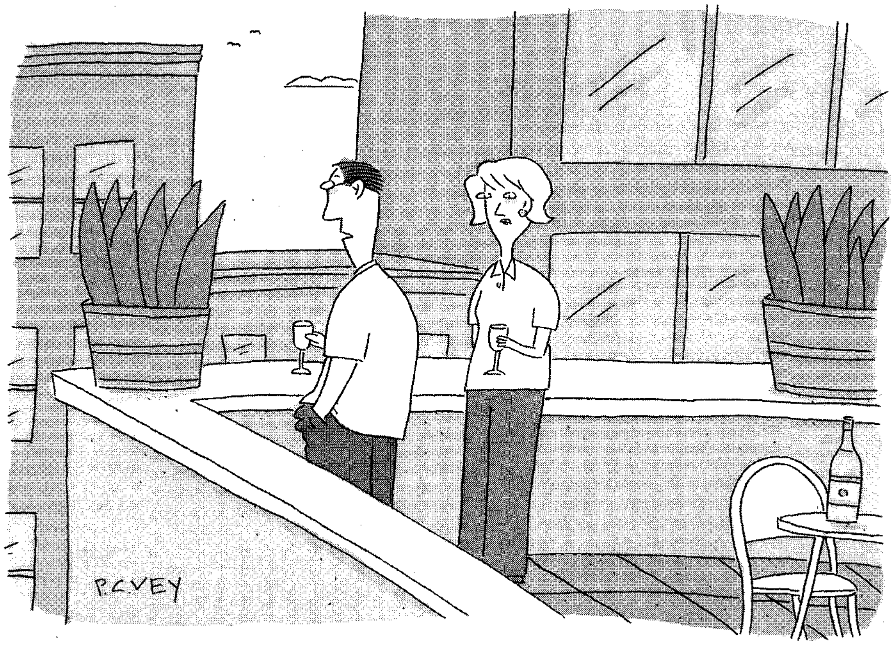
Peter Yarrow, with bully.

On to DLAM's outreach video. The tape included accounts of book-slamming, sandwich-spitting, and shin-kicking, as well as footage of a rendition of "Don't Laugh at Me" that Yarrow had performed at the United Nations. "A ridicule-free world," a soothing voice intoned. "It's possible, but only with everyone's help." (DLAM's efforts at enrichment may also extend to Peter, Paul & Mary's back catalogue. Page 22 of the teacher's guide instructs: "Tell students that this version of the song 'Don't Laugh at Me' is sung by Peter, Paul & Mary. If you have not already done so, tell them a little bit about the group. . . . In the early 1960s, Peter, Paul & Mary were the #1 recording group in the country.")

Next up was "The Big Betrayal Conflict Script," a skit about two friends, Terry and Sasha, who get into a fight at a basketball game. The exercise emphasized using "I messages," as opposed to those that begin with "you" and, therefore, can put their targets on the defensive. (DLAM also recommends having students simulate the sound of a rainstorm and discuss a story called "The Maligned Wolf.")

"Just make sure they're sticking to the formula," Hurdle-Price advised. "I often get students who say, 'I feel that you are stupid.'"

Later, the class broke for lunch. A very



"I wish there was a way to get out of the city this summer without leaving Manhattan."

• •

tall woman in a hunter-green suit lingered. Her name was Anelien Venter. An education specialist from Cape Province, South Africa, Venter had discovered Operation Respect on the Internet and had come to the United States to spend two months studying it. She had already taken it upon herself to translate many of the program's materials into Afrikaans, tweaking certain cultural details. "I have Terry and Sasha, for instance, fighting at a rugby match instead of a basketball game," she said. She reached into a tote bag and pulled out a binder with a clear plastic cover: "Projek Respek Werkswinkel."

—*Lauren Collins*

THE NIGHT LIFE
OFF DUTY

A book party with no cocktails: ouch. In fairness to the folks at the New Press, which helped organize such a dreaded event recently, at a restaurant on West Twenty-ninth Street, there were a few limiting circumstances. For one thing, almost all of the invited guests were driving. Also, most of them were Muslims and, more to the point, among the city's best experts on the consequences of excessive social drinking. They were cabbies. The book being celebrated was "Taxi! Cabs and Capitalism in New York City," by Biju Mathew, a business professor at Rider University, and a founding member of the New York Taxi Workers Alliance, a fast-growing labor union.

Compounding the problem was the fact that the party didn't begin until 1 A.M.—the start of the slow period for drivers working the night shift. Many of the cabbies, at least, would likely have been in the neighborhood anyway. The stretch of the upper Twenties bounded by Lexington and Broadway is their sanctuary—featuring not only the union's headquarters but also free and plentiful late-night parking, a popular mosque, and several subcontinental restaurants, including Lasani, where the party took place.

For nearly an hour, the author, who was wearing a kurta and jeans, greeted incoming guests and answered apologetic phone calls from those who were still en route. Early arrivals sat at tables in the front, drinking water from plastic cups and reading the Pakistan *Post*. On the wall, a makeshift poster was affixed with old newspaper clippings: "CABBIE CHEATS DEATH," "HACK STABBED." Unlike, say, "The New York City Cab Driver's Book of Dirty Jokes," which was honored with a party of its own several days later, at the National Arts Club, "Taxi!" is an earnest political tract, and the mood at Lasani reflected the mission. Obligatory author remarks and testimonials were accompanied by readings about the "neoliberal economy" ("Arguably, the taxi industry as it was formed in the 1980s reflected the globalized world of finance capital"), and by a call to protest the Taxi and Limousine Commission's planned installation of Global Positioning Systems. ("It's very clear that this is coming down from Homeland Security," Bhairavi Desai, the alliance's executive director, announced.)

Discordant cell-phone rings punctuated the proceedings. Eventually, it was time to eat, and the throngs lined up for curry and naan. Exactly what the full range of party chatter was is tough to say, because a variety of languages were spoken, but an interloper, with a little persistence, was able to discern that most drivers would probably disagree with the cheery characterization of the yellow cab (made at a recent design forum at Parsons) as "New York's movable public space." A fairer, if blunter, slogan might be: "Our workspace, where you annoy and disrespect us."

"They treat the car like they're slobs," a driver whose handle on the Bengal Cabbie Association's CB radio channel is Babar said of his passengers. He added that those who sit in the front seat, and who make radio requests, are usually drunk. Drunk passengers occasionally throw up, and the smell lingers for weeks.

"There are so many things," Rizwan Raja, a Pakistani driver, said, rattling off a list of his pet peeves: putting one's feet up on the partition, smoking, crossing the street lackadaisically. Requesting multiple stops is also frowned upon. "These people come out of expensive, posh bars, where one beer is twenty dollars, but they make groups together so they can share a taxi and save a couple of dollars," Raja said. " 'Three stops'—that really, really blows me off." Tips, ever since the fare increase, have been meagre: "Sometimes forty cents, sometimes twenty cents."

Raja went on, "The worst is when they ask, 'Where are you from?' Once you answer that question, then it's 'What is the relationship between Al Qaeda and the

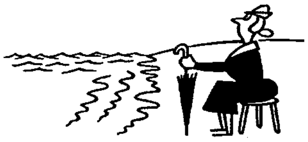
Pakistani government?' " Raja, who says he is asked that question "almost every day," has recommended that his passengers see "Fahrenheit 9/11."

By 3 A.M., the crowd had dwindled to about a dozen, who sat around a table eating rice pudding and drinking more water. With dessert, at last, came a festive atmosphere: jokes! Desai, the alliance's director, started off: "George Bush, Tony Blair, and Yasir Arafat arrive at the gates of Heaven . . ." Another joke followed, featuring Ronald Reagan and the Pope. A third involved male and female parrots, placed in the same cage at long last. (The punch line, delivered by a male parrot: "Yo, God has finally listened!") No dirty jokes, alas.

The interloper, emerging from Lasani at 4 A.M., sober and sleepy, hailed a cab on Sixth Avenue and rode home in the back seat in silence. One stop. The fare was five dollars and eighty cents, and he handed the driver eight dollars.

—*Ben McGrath*

ROME POSTCARD
DOWN BY THE RIVER



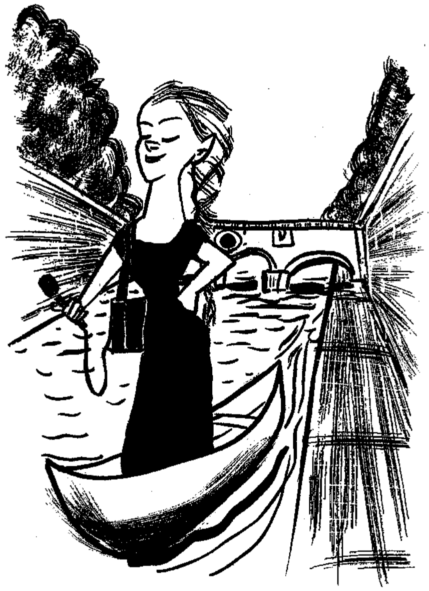
Kristin Jones has a watchword that has guided her long struggle to make public art in Rome: " 'No' is an inspiration." Until last week, Jones's Eternaltiber project had endured years of inspiration, dispensed by a wide range of Roman bureaucrats. The origins of the project, which seeks to transform the Tiber River permanently, go back to 1983, when Jones, a recent graduate of Yale's School of Art, went to Rome and discovered, as many visitors do, that the Tiber is perhaps the most neglected part of the city—confined far below street level in a smelly and derelict stone channel, a forlorn and forbidding place. Jones was then beginning to evolve what has become her mission: making the world better through artistic "interventions." Now forty-eight, she has created installations and projects in museums and cities around the world, but saving the Tiber (as she puts it) has become her life's work.

Just because the Tiber is neglected, however, doesn't mean that it's unmanaged. In fact, as Jones found, it is micromanaged. There are various city, state, and regional agencies responsible for the water volume, the water quality, the river bottom, the embankments, the forty-foot-high walls; even the graffiti on these walls is under official control. The result is anarchy. "I once thought it would be interesting to make an organizational flowchart of all the different river authorities and their relationship to each other," Jones said last week. "But I realized that I could never draw it, because you'd need a dimension that hasn't been discovered." The so-called "spontaneous trees" that grow through the travertine at the river's edge are the only part of the river that is free from management—and, because no one is in charge of them, they can't be touched, either.

Over the years, "for the sake of the forsaken Tiber," Jones has met with virtually every important official in Rome, from the mayor, Walter Veltroni, on down. She has the exasperating habit of presenting her own artistic ambitions as a gift to the city, and then haranguing the authorities for not realizing how lucky they are. If she hadn't been an artist, she'd have made a good missionary, of the flinty New England variety, like Katharine Hepburn in "The African Queen." Perhaps the authorities were wary of American do-gooders. Maybe they'd heard about "Metronome," Jones's notorious 1999 public work in Manhattan's Union Square, a giant spiral with steam spurting from its center, which Jones describes as "the most unloved piece of public art in the city." Or perhaps they weren't sufficiently familiar with Jones's more successful projects, such as "Oculus," her installation at the World Trade Center/Chambers Street subway stop, which consists of three hundred eye-shaped mosaics. (Both of these were done with her husband, Andrew Ginzel.)

With each new "No," the Tiber River project got larger and more elaborate, evolving into a multidisciplinary effort that included underwater ribbons of L.E.D. light, wall-projections of giant she-wolves, and a river piazza. Jones learned Italian and began spending half of every year in Rome. Her marriage broke up. She became a familiar presence on the water, conducting her eccentric experiments and activities (recording the sound of the river, filming its periodic surges) with a great sense of purpose, her voluminous blond hair contained in a long braid—she looks a bit like a prep-school field-hockey player relentlessly advancing on the goal. She was often trailed by a group of Italian artists, technicians, or students; in spite of the resistance of Roman officials, there is a ready spirit of *volentieri*, or "with pleasure," among the people.

Last Tuesday, shortly after the sun had set on the longest day of the year, Kristin Jones finally saved the Tiber—or, at least, the quarter-mile stretch between the Ponte Sisto and the Ponte Mazzini. Two thousand seven hundred and fifty-eight candles, one for each year since the founding of Rome, lined both sides of the river, illuminating the she-wolves imprinted on the walls. The wolves are supposed to represent Rome's mythical mother, although they may also represent Kristin Jones. (To get approval for the wolves, she had asked the city's anti-graffiti bureau if its workers would selectively clean around her stencils, so that the wolves would emerge out of the grime. Not even *la burocrazia* could say no to that.) A choir of Tibetan-style "intoners" chanted to the amplified sound of the river. Nobody walks along the Tiber at night, but on this night the riverbanks were crowded with Romans murmuring "*Che bello!*" to each other and to the full moon.



Kristin Jones

Jones, however, seemed curiously uninspired by the whole scene. "It's a start," she said with a shake of her braid.

—*John Seabrook*

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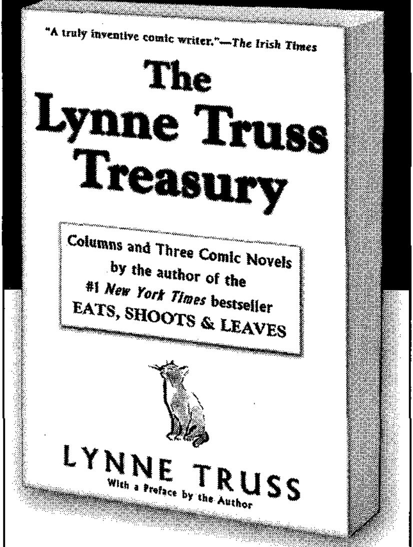
bestseller
Eats, Shoots
& Leaves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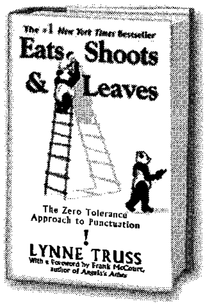
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LETTER FROM WASHINGTON

REAL INSIDERS

A pro-Israel lobby and an F.B.I. sting.

BY JEFFREY GOLDBERG

Several years ago, I had dinner at Galileo, a Washington restaurant, with Steven Rosen, who was then the director of foreign-policy issues at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. The group, which is better known by its acronym, AIPAC, lobbies for Israel's financial and physical security. Like many lobbyists, Rosen cultivated reporters, hoping to influence their writing while keeping his name out of print. He is a voluble man, and liked to demonstrate his erudition and dispense aphorisms. One that he often repeated could serve as the credo of K Street, the Rodeo Drive of Washington's influence industry: "A lobby is like a night flower: it thrives in the dark and dies in the sun."

Lobbyists tend to believe that legislators are susceptible to persuasion in ways that executive-branch bureaucrats are not, and before Rosen came to AIPAC, in 1982 (he had been at the RAND Corporation, the defense-oriented think tank), the group focussed mainly on Congress. But Rosen arrived brandishing a new idea: that the organization could influence the outcome of policy disputes within the executive branch—in particular, the Pentagon, the State Department, and the National Security Council.

Rosen began to court officials. He traded in gossip and speculation, and his reports to AIPAC's leaders helped them track currents in Middle East policymaking before those currents coalesced into executive orders. Rosen also used his contacts to carry AIPAC's agenda to the White House. An early success came in 1983, when he helped lobby for a strategic coöperation agreement between Israel and the United States, which was signed over the objections of Caspar Weinberger, the Secretary of Defense, and which led to a new level of intelligence sharing and military sales.

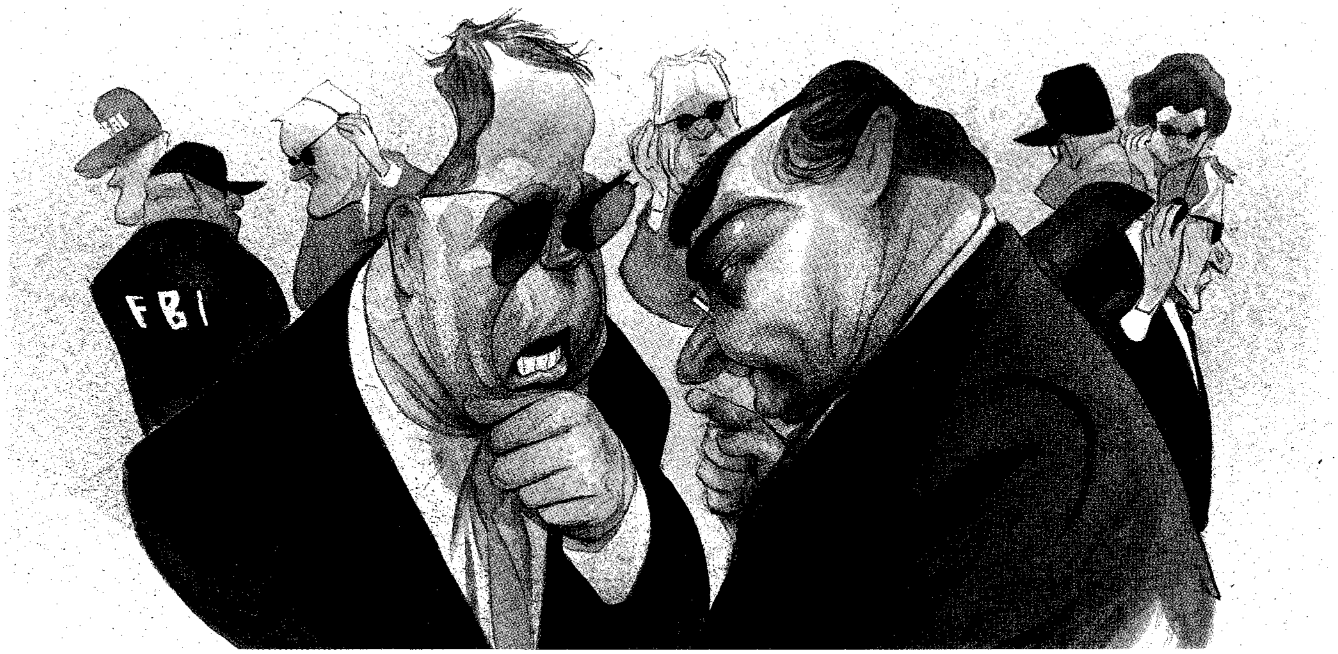
AIPAC is a leviathan among lobbies, as influential in its sphere as the National Rifle Association and the American Association of Retired Persons are in theirs, although it is, by comparison, much smaller. (AIPAC has about a hundred thousand members, the N.R.A. more than four million.) President Bush, speaking at the annual AIPAC conference in May of 2004, said, "You've always understood and warned against the evil ambition of terrorism and their networks. In a dangerous new century, your work is more vital than ever." AIPAC is unique in the top tier of lobbies because its concerns are the economic health and security of a foreign nation, and because its members are drawn almost entirely from a single ethnic group.

AIPAC's professional staff—it employs about a hundred people at its headquarters, two blocks from the Capitol—analyzes congressional voting records and shares the results with its members, who can then contribute money to candidates directly or to a network of pro-Israel political-action committees. The Center for Responsive Politics, a public-policy group, estimates that between 1990 and 2004 these PACs gave candidates and parties more than twenty million dollars.

Robert H. Asher, a former AIPAC president, told me that the PACs are usually given euphemistic names. "I started a PAC called Citizens Concerned for the National Interest," he said. Asher, who is from Chicago, is a retired manufacturer of lamps and shades, and a member of the so-called Gang of Four—former presidents of AIPAC, who steered the group's policies for more than two decades. (The three others are Larry Weinberg, a California real-estate developer and a former owner of the Portland Trail Blazers; Edward Levy, a construction-materials executive from Detroit; and Mayer "Bubba" Mitchell, a retired builder based in Mobile, Alabama.)

AIPAC, Asher explained, is loyal to its friends and merciless to its enemies. In

1982, Asher led a campaign to defeat Paul Findley, a Republican congressman from Springfield, Illinois, who once referred to himself as "Yasir Arafat's best friend in Congress," and who later compared Arafat to Gandhi and Martin Luther King, Jr.



Agents observed Lawrence Franklin (left), a Pentagon analyst, meeting Keith Weissman, of AIPAC, at a Virginia shopping mall.

STEVE BRODNER

"There was a real desire to help Findley out of Congress," Asher said. He identified an obscure Democratic lawyer in Springfield, Richard Durbin, as someone who could defeat Findley. "We met at my apartment in Chicago, and I recruited him to run for Congress," he recalled. "I probed his views and I explained things that I had learned mostly from AIPAC. I wanted to make sure we were supporting someone who was not only against Paul Findley but also a friend of Israel."

Asher went on, "He beat Findley with a lot of help from Jews, in-state and out-of-state. Now, how did the Jewish money find him? I travelled around the country talking about how we had the opportunity to defeat someone unfriendly to Israel. And the gates opened." Durbin, who went on to win a Senate seat, is now the Democratic whip. He is a fierce critic of Bush's Iraq policy but, like AIPAC, generally supports the Administration's approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Durbin says that he considers Asher to be his "most loyal friend in the Jewish community."

Mayer Mitchell led a similar campaign, three years ago, to defeat Earl Hilliard, an Alabama congressman who was a critic of Israel. Mitchell helped direct support to a young Harvard Law School graduate named Artur Davis, who challenged Hilliard in the Democratic primary, and he solicited donations from AIPAC supporters across America. Davis won the primary, and the seat. "I asked Bubba how he felt after Davis won," Asher said, "and he said, 'Just like you did when Durbin got elected.'" Mitchell declined to comment.

AIPAC's leaders can be immoderately frank about the group's influence. At dinner that night with Steven Rosen, I mentioned a controversy that had enveloped AIPAC in 1992. David Steiner, a New Jersey real-estate developer who was then serving as AIPAC's president, was caught on tape boasting that he had "cut a deal" with the Administration of George H. W. Bush to provide more aid to Israel. Steiner also said that he was "negotiating" with the incoming Clinton Administration over the appointment of a pro-Israel Secretary of State. "We have a dozen people in his"—Clinton's—"headquarters . . . and they are all going to get big jobs," Steiner said. Soon after the tape's existence was disclosed, Steiner resigned his post. I asked Rosen if AIPAC suffered a loss of influence after the Steiner affair. A half smile appeared on his face, and he pushed a napkin across the table. "You see this napkin?" he said. "In twenty-four hours, we could have the signatures of seventy senators on this napkin."

Rosen was influential from the start. He was originally recruited for the job by Larry Weinberg, one of the Gang of Four, and he helped choose the group's leaders, including the current executive director, Howard Kohr, a Republican who began his AIPAC career as Rosen's deputy. Rosen, who can be argumentative and impolitic, was never a candidate for the top post. "He's a bit of a *kochleffl*"—the Yiddish term for a pot-stirrer, or meddler—Martin Indyk, who also served as Rosen's deputy, and who went on to become President Clinton's Ambassador to Israel, says. Rosen has had an unusually eventful private life, marrying and divorcing six times (he is living again with his first wife), and he has a well-developed sense of paranoia. When we met, he would sometimes lower his voice, even when he was preparing to deliver an anodyne pronouncement. "Hostile ears are always listening," he was fond of saying.

Nevertheless, he is a keen analyst of Middle East politics, and a savvy bureaucratic infighter. His views on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are not notably hawkish; he once called himself "too right for the left, and too left for the right." He is a hard-liner on only one subject—Iran—and this preoccupation helped shape AIPAC’s position: that Iran poses a greater threat to Israel than any other nation. In this way, AIPAC is in agreement with a long line of Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, who fears Iran’s nuclear intentions more than he ever feared Saddam Hussein’s. (AIPAC lobbied Congress in favor of the Iraq war, but Iraq has not been one of its chief concerns.) Rosen’s main role at AIPAC, he once told me, was to collect evidence of “Iranian perfidy” and share it with the United States.

Unlike American neoconservatives, who have openly supported the Likud Party over the more liberal Labor Party, AIPAC does not generally take sides in Israeli politics. But on Iran AIPAC’s views resemble those of the neoconservatives. In 1996, Rosen and other AIPAC staff members helped write, and engineer the passage of, the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act, which imposed sanctions on foreign oil companies doing business with those two countries; AIPAC is determined, above all, to deny Iran the ability to manufacture nuclear weapons. Iran was a main focus of this year’s AIPAC policy conference, which was held in May at the Washington Convention Center. Ariel Sharon and Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, among others, addressed five thousand AIPAC members. One hall of the convention center was taken up by a Disney-style walk-through display of an Iranian nuclear facility. It was kitsch, but not ineffective, and Rosen undoubtedly would have appreciated it. Rosen, however, was not there. He was fired earlier this year by Howard Kohr, nine months after he became implicated in an F.B.I. espionage investigation. Rosen’s lawyer, Abbe Lowell, expects him to be indicted on charges of passing secret information about Iranian intelligence activities in Iraq to an official of the Israeli Embassy and to a Washington *Post* reporter. A junior colleague, Keith Weissman, who served as an Iran analyst for AIPAC until he, too, was fired, may face similar charges.

MAGICIAN

You woke up crying
“Why did our baby die?”

I said, “You’re dreaming.
We don’t have a baby.”

“Yes, we do. But it died.”
You’re sobbing, sweaty.

“Look, sweetheart, you said ‘it.’
That proves we don’t have a baby.

If we had one, you would say ‘she’
Or ‘he.’ ” I smooth your hair.

I kiss your cheek. Your temperature
Has cooled. You’re asleep again.

It would have a name.
“His name or her name

always disappears just before
I wake up.”

And also just before you fall asleep.
Nothing ever really happens.

—*Brenda Shaughnessy*

The person who, in essence, ended Rosen’s career is a fifty-eight-year-old Pentagon analyst named Lawrence Anthony Franklin, who is even more preoccupied with Iran than Steven Rosen. Franklin, until recently the Pentagon’s Iran desk officer, was indicted last month on espionage charges. The Justice Department has accused him of giving “national-defense information” to Rosen and Weissman, and classified information to an Israeli official. Franklin has pleaded not guilty; a tentative trial date is set for September. If convicted, he will face at least ten years in prison.

I first met Franklin in November of 2002. Paul Wolfowitz, then the Deputy Secretary of Defense, was receiving the Henry M. (Scoop) Jackson award from the Jewish Institute for National Security Affairs, a conservative-leaning group that tries to build close relations between the American and Israeli militaries. In the ballroom of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel at Pentagon City, a shopping mall, were a number of American generals and the Israeli Ambassador to the United States, Danny Ayalon.

Franklin, a trim man with blond hair and a military bearing, is a colonel in the Air Force Reserve who spent several years as an analyst at the Defense Intelligence Agency. He has a doctorate in Asian studies and describes himself as a capable speaker of Farsi. In addition, he was a Catholic in a largely Jewish network of Pentagon Iran hawks.

Franklin was particularly close to the neoconservative Harold Rhode, an official in the Office of Net Assessment, the Pentagon’s in-house think tank. Franklin was also close to Michael Ledeen, who, twenty years ago, played an important role in the Iran-Contra scandal by helping arrange meetings between the American government and the Iranian arms dealer Manucher Ghorbanifar. Ledeen, now a resident scholar at the American Enterprise Institute, is one of the most outspoken advocates in Washington of confrontation with the Tehran regime.

The conversation at the banquet, and just about everywhere else in official

Washington at that time, centered on the coming war in Iraq. "We may well hope that with the demise of a truly evil and despotic regime in Iraq, we will see the liberation of one of the most talented peoples in the Arab world," Wolfowitz said in his speech. Franklin did not seem especially concerned with the topic at hand. As we stood outside the banquet hall, he said that Iran, not Iraq, would turn out to be the most difficult challenge in the war on terror.

Then, as now, the Administration was divided on the question of Iran. Many of the political appointees at the Defense Department hoped that America would support dissidents in an attempt to overthrow Iran's ruling clerics, while the State Department argued for containment. Even within the Defense Department, many officials believed that it would be imprudent to make regime change in Tehran a top priority. "There are neocons who thought Iran should come sooner and neocons who thought it should come later," Reuel Marc Gerecht, of the American Enterprise Institute, told me. As for Franklin, Gerecht, a former Iran specialist in the C.I.A.'s Directorate of Operations, said, "It's fair to say that Larry was impatient with Bush Administration policy on Iran." In the Pentagon's policy office, I learned later, it was sometimes said that Franklin inhabited a place called Planet Franklin. Gerecht referred to him as "sweet, bumbling Larry."

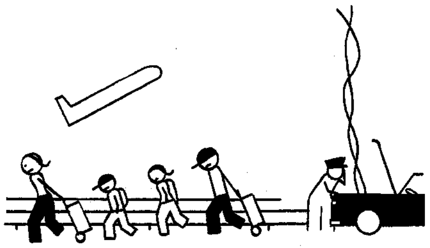
A year later, on a reporting assignment in Israel, I ran into Franklin at the Herzliya Conference, which is the Davos of the Israeli security establishment. He said that he was there on Defense Department business. We talked briefly about Iraq—it was eight months after the invasion—and, as we spoke, General Moshe Ya'alon, then the Israeli Army chief of staff, swept into the room surrounded by bodyguards and uniformed aides. "Wow," Franklin said.

We stepped outside, and he talked only about Iran's threat to America. "Our intelligence is blind," he said. "It's the most dangerous country in the world to the U.S., and we have nothing on the ground. We don't understand anything that goes on. I mean, the C.I.A. doesn't have anything. This goes way deeper than Tenet"—George Tenet, who was the director of central intelligence at the time. He continued, "Do you know how dangerous Iran is to our forces in the Gulf? We have great force-concentration issues now"—the presence of American troops in Iraq—"and the Iranians are very interested in making life difficult for American forces. They have the capability. You watch what they're doing in Iraq. Their infiltration is everywhere."

Franklin seemed more frustrated with American policy in Iran than he had the year before. "We don't understand that it's doable—regime change is doable," he said. "The people are so desperate to become free, and the mullahs are so unpopular. They're so pro-American, the people." Referring to the Bush Administration, he said, "That's what they don't understand," and he added, "And they also don't understand how anti-American the mullahs are." Franklin was convinced that the Iranians would commit acts of terrorism against Americans, on American soil. "These guys are a threat to us in Iraq and even at home," he said.

Franklin was not a high-ranking Pentagon official; he was five steps removed in the hierarchy from Douglas Feith, the Under-Secretary for Policy. For two years, though, he had been trying to change American policy. His efforts took many forms, including calls to reporters, meetings with Rosen and Weissman and with the political counsellor at the Israeli Embassy, Naor Gilon. According to Tracy O'Grady-Walsh, a Pentagon spokeswoman, he was not acting on behalf of his superiors: "If Larry Franklin was formally or informally lobbying, he was doing it on his own."

Franklin also sought information from Iranian dissidents who might aid his cause. In December of 2001, he and Rhode met in Rome with Michael Ledeen and a group of Iranians, including Manucher Ghorbanifar. Ledeen, who helped arrange the meeting, told me that the dissidents gave Franklin and Rhode information about Iranian threats against American soldiers in Afghanistan. (Rhode did not return calls seeking comment.) Franklin was initially skeptical about the meeting, Ledeen said, but emerged believing that America could do business with these dissidents.



Franklin's meetings with Gilon and with the two AIPAC men make up the heart of the indictment against him. The indictment alleges that Rosen—"CC-1," or "Co-Conspirator 1"—called the Pentagon in early August of 2002, looking for the name of an Iran specialist. He made contact with Franklin a short time later, but, according to the indictment, they did not meet until February of 2003. In their meetings, according to several people with knowledge of the conversations, Franklin told the lobbyists that Secretary of State Colin Powell was resisting attempts by the Pentagon to formulate a tougher Iran policy. He apparently hoped to use AIPAC to lobby the Administration.

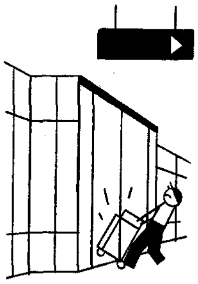
The Franklin indictment suggests that the F.B.I. had been watching Rosen as well; for instance, it alleges that, in February of 2003, Rosen, on his way to a meeting with Franklin, told someone on the phone that he "was excited to meet with a 'Pentagon guy' because this person was a 'real insider.' " Franklin, Rosen, and Weissman met openly four times in 2003. At one point, the indictment reads, somewhat mysteriously, "On or about March 10, 2003, Franklin, CC-1 and CC-2"— Rosen and Weissman—"met at Union Station early in the morning. In the course of the meeting, the three men moved from one restaurant to another restaurant and then finished the meeting in an empty restaurant."

On June 26, 2003, at a lunch at the Tivoli Restaurant, near the Pentagon, Franklin reportedly told Rosen and Weissman about a draft of a National Security Presidential Directive that outlined a series of tougher steps that the U.S. could take against the Iranian leadership. The draft was written by a young Pentagon aide named Michael Rubin (who is now affiliated with the American Enterprise Institute). Franklin did not hand over a copy of the draft, but he described its contents, and, according to the indictment, talked about the "state of internal United States government deliberations." The indictment also alleges that Franklin gave the two men "highly classified" information about potential attacks on American forces in Iraq.

In mid-August of 2002, according to the indictment, Franklin met with Gilon—identified simply as "FO," or "foreign official"—at a restaurant, and Gilon explained to Franklin that he was the "policy" person at the Embassy. The two met regularly, the indictment alleges, often at the Pentagon Officers' Athletic Club, to discuss "foreign policy issues," particularly regarding a "Middle Eastern country"—Iran, by all accounts—and "its nuclear program." The indictment suggests that Franklin was receiving information and policy advice from Gilon; after one meeting, Franklin drafted an "Action Memo" to his supervisors incorporating Gilon's suggestions. Gilon is an expert on weapons proliferation, according to Danny Ayalon, the Israeli Ambassador, and has briefed reporters about Israel's position on Iran. According to Lawrence Di Rita, a Pentagon spokesman, it is part of the "job description" of Defense Department desk officers to meet with their foreign counterparts. "Desk officers meet with foreign officials all the time, not with ministers, but interactions with people at their level," he said. The indictment contends, however, that on two occasions Franklin gave Gilon classified information.

The issue of Israel's activities in Washington is unusually sensitive. Twenty years ago, a civilian Naval Intelligence analyst named Jonathan Pollard was caught stealing American secrets on behalf of an Israeli intelligence cell—a "rogue" cell, the Israelis later claimed. Pollard said that he was driven to treason because, as a Jew, he could not abide what he saw as America's unwillingness to share crucial intelligence with Israel. Pollard's actions were an embarrassment for American Jews, who fear the accusation of "dual loyalty"—the idea that they split their allegiance between the United States and Israel. For Israel, the case was a moral and political disaster. And there are some in the American intelligence community who suspect that Israel has never stopped spying on the United States.

Earlier this month, Ayalon told me that Israel does not "collect any intelligence on the United States, period, full stop. We won't do anything to risk this most important relationship." In any case, he said, there was no need to spy, "because coöperation is so intimate and effective between Israel and the U.S." Ayalon also said that Gilon, who is returning to Jerusalem later this summer, remains an important member of his staff; in recent months, Gilon has attended meetings at the State Department, the Pentagon, and the White House.



In June of 2004, F.B.I. agents searched Franklin's Pentagon office and his home in West Virginia, and allegedly found eighty-three classified documents. Some had to do with the Iran debate, but some pertained to Al Qaeda and Iraq. (A separate federal indictment, citing the documents, has been handed down in West Virginia.) According to a person with knowledge of Franklin's case, the agents told Franklin that Rosen and Weissman were working against America's interests. Franklin faced ruin—the documents found in his house could cost him his job, the agents said. Franklin, who did not have a lawyer, agreed to coöperate in the investigation of Rosen and Weissman, although apparently he was not given in return a specific promise of leniency. Soon, he was wired, and was asked to contact the two AIPAC employees. On July 21st, Franklin called Weissman and said that he had to speak to him immediately—that it was a matter of life and death. They arranged to meet outside the Nordstrom's department store at Pentagon City.

A month before that meeting, *The New Yorker* had published an article by Seymour Hersh about the activities of Israeli intelligence agents in northern Iraq. Franklin, who held a top-secret security clearance, allegedly told Weissman that he had new, classified information indicating that Iranian agents were planning to kidnap and kill the Israelis referred to by Hersh. American intelligence knew about the threat, Franklin said, but Israel might not. He also said that the Iranians had infiltrated southern Iraq, and were planning attacks on American soldiers. Rosen and Weissman, Franklin hoped, could insure that senior Administration officials received this news. It is unclear whether what Franklin relayed was true or whether it had been manufactured by the F.B.I. The Bureau has refused to comment on the case.

Weissman hurried back to AIPAC's headquarters and briefed Rosen and Howard Kohr, AIPAC's executive director. According to AIPAC sources, Rosen and Weissman asked Kohr to give the information to Elliott Abrams, the senior Middle East official on the National Security Council. Kohr didn't get in touch with Abrams, but Rosen and Weissman made two calls. They called Gilon and told him about the threat to Israeli agents in Iraq, and then they called Glenn Kessler, a diplomatic correspondent at the Washington *Post,* and told him about the threat to Americans.

A month later, on the morning of August 27, 2004, F.B.I. agents visited Rosen at his home, in Silver Spring, Maryland, seeking to question him. Rosen quickly called AIPAC's lawyers. That night, CBS News reported that an unnamed Israeli "mole" had been discovered in the Pentagon, and that the mole had been passing documents to two officials of AIPAC, who were passing the documents on to Israeli officials.

Within days, the names of Franklin, Rosen, and Weissman were made public. The F.B.I. informed Franklin that he was going to be charged with illegal possession of classified documents. Franklin was said by friends to be frightened, and surprised. He said that he could not afford to hire a lawyer. The F.B.I. arranged for a court-appointed attorney to represent him. The lawyer, a former federal prosecutor, advised him to plead guilty to espionage charges, and receive a prison sentence of six to eight years.

At about this time, Franklin received a call from Michael Ledeen, his ally in matters of Iran policy. "I called him and said, 'Larry, what's going on?' " Ledeen recalled. "He said, 'Don't worry. Sharansky' "—Natan Sharansky, the former Soviet dissident—" 'survived years in the Gulag, and I'll survive prison, too.' I said, 'What are you talking about?' He told me what was going on. I asked him if he had a good lawyer." Ledeen called the criminal-defense attorney Plato Cacheris. "I knew him from when he served as Fawn's attorney," Ledeen said, referring to Fawn Hall, who was Colonel Oliver North's secretary at the time of the Iran-Contra affair. Cacheris has also represented Monica Lewinsky and the F.B.I. agent Robert Hanssen, who spied for Moscow. Cacheris offered to represent Franklin pro bono, and Franklin accepted the offer.

AIPAC launched a special appeal for donations—for the organization, not for Rosen and Weissman. "Your generosity at this time will help ensure that false allegations do not hamper our ability or yours to work for a strong U.S.-Israel relationship and a safe and secure Israel," AIPAC's leaders wrote in the letter accompanying the appeal.

But in December four AIPAC officials, including Kohr, were subpoenaed to testify before a grand jury in Alexandria, Virginia. In March, AIPAC's principal lawyer, Nathan Lewin, met with the U.S. Attorney for the Eastern District of Virginia, Paul McNulty, who agreed to let Lewin see some of the evidence of the Pentagon City sting. According to an AIPAC source, an eleven-second portion of the telephone conversation between Rosen, Weissman, and the *Post's* Glenn Kessler, which the F.B.I. had recorded, was played for Lewin. In that conversation, Rosen is alleged to have told Kessler about Iranian agents in southern Iraq—information that Weissman had received from Franklin. In the part of the conversation that Lewin heard, Rosen jokes about "not getting in trouble" over the information. He also notes, "At least we have no Official Secrets Act"—the British law that makes journalists liable to prosecution if they publish classified material.

Prosecutors argued to Lewin that this statement proved that Rosen and Weissman were aware that the information Franklin had given them was classified, and that Rosen must therefore have known that he was passing classified information to Gilon, a foreign official. Lewin, who declined to comment on the case, recommended that AIPAC fire Rosen and Weissman. He also told the board that McNulty had promised that AIPAC itself would not be a target of the espionage investigation. An AIPAC spokesman, Patrick Dorton, said of the firing, "Rosen and Weissman were dismissed because they engaged in conduct that was not part of their jobs, and because this conduct did not comport with the standards that AIPAC expects and requires of its employees."

When I asked Abbe Lowell, Rosen's lawyer, about the firings, he said, "Steve Rosen's dealings with Larry Franklin were akin to his dealings with executive-branch officials for more than two decades and were well known, encouraged, and appreciated by AIPAC."

Last month, I met with Lowell and Rosen in Lowell's office, which these days is a center of Washington scandal management. (He also represents the fallen lobbyist Jack Abramoff.) Lowell had instructed Rosen not to discuss specifics of the case, but Rosen expressed disbelief that his career had been ended by an F.B.I. investigation. "I'm being looked at for things I've done for twenty-three years, which other foreign-policy groups, hundreds of foreign-policy groups, are doing," Rosen said, and went on, "Our job at AIPAC was to understand what the government is doing, in order to help form better policies, in the interests of the U.S. I've never done anything illegal or harmful to the U.S. I never even dreamed of doing anything harmful to the U.S." Later, he said, "We did not knowingly receive classified information from Larry Franklin." Lowell added, "When the facts are known, this will be a case not about Rosen and Weissman's actions but about the government's actions." Lowell said that he would not rehearse his arguments against any charges until there is an indictment.

Rosen said that he was particularly upset by the allegation that, because he had informed Gilon that Israeli lives might be in danger, he was a spy for Israel. "If I had been given information that British or Australian soldiers were going to be kidnapped or killed in Iraq, I think I would have done the same thing," he said. "I'd have tried to warn them by calling friends at those embassies." He wants to believe that he could return to AIPAC if he is exonerated, but this does not seem likely. AIPAC leaders are downplaying Rosen's importance to the organization. "AIPAC is focussed primarily on legislative lobbying," Dorton told me. Rosen's severance pay will end in September, although AIPAC, in accordance with its bylaws, will continue to pay legal fees for Rosen and Weissman.

Rosen's defenders are critical of AIPAC for its handling of the controversy. Martin Indyk, who is now the director of the Saban Center for Middle East Policy, a think tank within the Brookings Institution, thinks that AIPAC made a tactical mistake by cutting off the two men. "It appears they've abandoned their own on the battlefield," he says. "Because they cut Steve off, they leave him no choice." Indyk wouldn't elaborate, but the implication was clear: Rosen and Weissman will defend themselves by arguing that they were working in concert with the highest officials of the organization, including Kohr.

Until there is an indictment, the government's full case against Rosen and Weissman cannot be known; no one in the Justice Department will comment. The laws concerning the dissemination

"Can I call you back? I'm still recovering from a night of binge hiring."

of government secrets are sometimes ambiguous and often unenforced, and prosecutors in such cases face complex choices. According to Lee Strickland, a former chief privacy officer of the C.I.A., prosecutors pressing espionage charges against Rosen and Weissman would have to prove that the information the two men gave to Gilon not merely was classified but rose to the level of "national-defense information," meaning that it could cause dire harm to the United States. Yet a reporter who called the Embassy to discuss the same information in the course of preparing a story—thus violating the same statute—would almost certainly not be prosecuted. Strickland continued, "Twice in the Clinton Administration we had proposals to broaden the statutes to include the recipients, not just the leakers, of classified information. The New York *Times* and the Washington *Post* went bat-shit about this legislation. They saw it as an attempt to shut down leaks." If American law did punish those who receive, and then pass on, or publish, privileged information, much of the Washington press corps would be in jail, according to Lee Levine, a First Amendment lawyer. So would a great many government officials, elected and appointed, for whom classified information is the currency of conversation with reporters and lobbyists.

Strickland, who said that he had spent much of his career at the C.I.A. "shutting down" leaks, called the AIPAC affair "uncharted territory." It is uncommon, he said, for an espionage case to be built on the oral transmission of national-defense information. He also said, "Intent is always an element. If I were a defense attorney, I would argue that this was a form of entrapment. The F.B.I. agents deliberately set my client up, put him in a moral quandary." He added, however, that although a jury might recognize the quandary, the law does not. "Just because you have information that would help a foreign country doesn't make it your job to pass that information."

Even some of AIPAC's most vigorous critics do not see the Rosen affair as a traditional espionage case. James Bamford, who is the author of well-received books about the National Security Agency, and an often vocal critic of Israel and the pro-Israel lobby, sees the case as a cautionary tale about one lobbying group's disproportionate influence: "What Pollard did was espionage. This is a much different and more unique animal—this is the selling of ideology, trying to sell a viewpoint." He continued, "Larry Franklin is not going to knock on George Bush's door, but he can get AIPAC, which is a pressure group, and the Israeli government, which is an enormous pressure group, to try to get the American government to change its policy to a more aggressive policy." Bamford, who believes that Weissman and Rosen may indeed be guilty of soliciting information and passing it to a foreign government, sees the case as a kind of brushback pitch, a way of limiting AIPAC's long—and, in Bamford's view, dangerous—reach.

Other AIPAC critics see the lobby's behavior as business as usual in Washington. "The No. 1 game in Washington is making people talking to you feel like you're an insider, that you've got information no one else has," Sam Gejdenson, a former Democratic congressman from Connecticut, says. When Gejdenson opposed a proposal to increase Israel's foreign-aid allocation at the expense of more economically needy countries, AIPAC, he said, responded by "sitting on its hands" during his reëlection campaigns, despite the fact that he is Jewish. "It's like any other lobbying group," he said. "Its job isn't to come up with the best ideas for mankind, or the U.S. It's narrowly focussed."

AIPAC officials insist that the case has not affected the organization's effectiveness. But its operations have certainly been hindered by the controversy of the past year, and the F.B.I. sting may force lobbyists of all sorts to be more careful about trying to penetrate the executive branch—and about leaking to reporters. And AIPAC now seems acutely sensitive to the appearance of dual loyalty. The theme of this year's AIPAC conference was "Israel, an American Value," and, for the first time, "Hatikvah," the Israeli national anthem, was not sung. The only anthem heard was "The Star-Spangled Banner." ♦

WE KNOW THE FEELING DEPARTMENT

From the Hartford Courant.

Robert "Bob" E. Welch, 56, of Enfield passed away, Saturday (January 29, 2005) at the West Haven Veterans Hospital after a long battle with his family at his bedside.

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SHOUTS & MURMURS

CAMP CORRESPONDENCE

BY BRUCE McCALL

An Open Letter to All Camp Idlehands Parents:

Your support is urged for the proposed merger of Camp Idlehands and Blustery Winds—particularly if you prefer to see your camper return home this Labor Day louse-free. To facilitate the merger, we urge you to withdraw your child from Idlehands now and register him or her at Blustery Winds. Disregard any new communications you may receive from the Camp Idlehands management, which is resisting this sound business offer with a smear campaign against Blustery Winds that is a smoke screen for its own failures. To wit:

—Wallet production in the Idlehands leather-craft program has fallen by seventy-four per cent since last summer.

—Idlehands management throws Saturday-night Ben & Jerry's ice-cream parties for itself, while campers must make do with generic fro-yo.

—Due to supply inadequacies, Idlehands color wars sow mass confusion by pitting pink team against pink team.

Summary: It's high time to call a halt to fleecing and rot. For your young camper's sake, vote "Yes" to the merger proposition by enrolling your child in Blustery Winds today.

Attention All Camp Idlehands Parents:

Don't be gulled by the sweet talk of a takeover gang that wants to crush the vibrant Camp Idlehands spirit and replace our beloved campfire song with "I'm a Toys R Us Kid." Keep your camper at Idlehands!

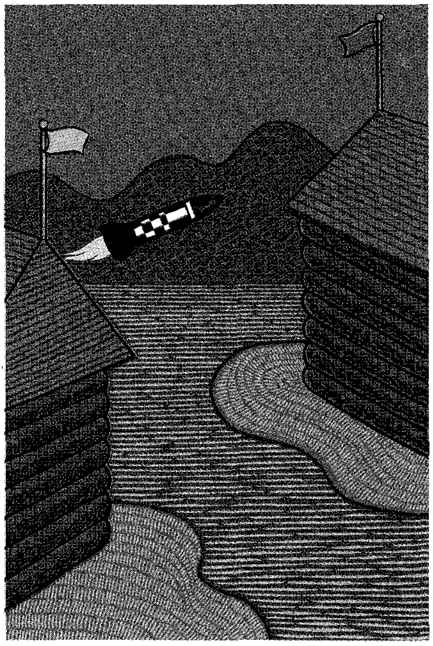
Fact: Blustery Winds' ballyhooed "Homeward Bound Self-Reliance Program" is a transparent cover for the fact that the camp bus has been sold.

Fact: Numerous Blustery Winds campers report seeing desserts in the mess hall move.

Bulletin: As a special inducement to ward off this unsolicited takeover grab, Camp Idlehands is offering a *ten-per-cent refund of camper fees* to all parents whose children stay the full session.

Emergency Notice to All Camp Idlehands Parents:

Don't be bribed. Blustery Winds is more determined than ever to rescue Camp Idlehands from the neglect and ineptitude that led to:



MICHAEL KUPPERMAN

—Widespread camper rioting after the fifth consecutive screening of "The Parent Trap" on Movie Nite.

—A "don't ask, don't tell" bed-wetting policy.

—Recruitment of local tots as stand-ins on Parents' Day to mask Idlehands' slumping enrollment.

Blustery Winds is countering Camp Idlehands' desperate fee-refund offer with its own good-will gesture: a FREE sixty-second long-distance call home to every Idlehands camper who transfers to Blustery Winds in the next twenty-four hours.

Say "Yes" to the Blustery Winds merger proposal. The camper you save may be your own!

Camp Idlehands Parents:

Don't be hornswoggled! Did you know that the Blustery Winds spoilers, if they succeed in grabbing Camp Idlehands, will license the tuck shop to 7-Eleven, Inc.? That Blustery Winds' glassblowing instructor suffers from chronic hiccups?

If you value a quality camping experience for your child, keep Idlehands free and independent. Vote "No" to the cynical takeover scheme. Keep him or her at Idlehands—where, in addition to your ten-per-cent fee refund, you will receive a complimentary live guinea pig as a take-home pet for your child.

Urgent Notice to Camp Idlehands Parents:

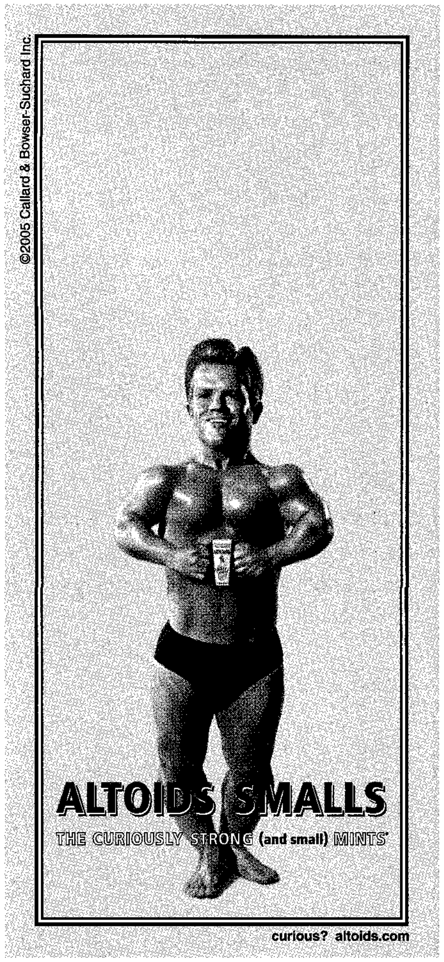
You should know that Blustery Winds—while contesting Idlehands management's outrageous "Golden Bedroll" provision—has lowered its fees by fifteen per cent for all Idlehands campers who transfer to Blustery Winds by midnight today. Vote "Yes" to the fair and reasonable Blustery Winds merger offer, *and* give your camper the extra gift of drinking privileges for the rest of his or her stay. Transfer your camper to Blustery Winds today!

Camp Idlehands and Blustery Winds—Partners in Progress:

Camp Idlehands and Blustery Winds managements join in strongly recommending that you vote "Yes" to the proposal just accepted from PineTar Woods, a leisure subsidiary of FloPezCo, and transfer your camper immediately to PineTar Woods. Buses are waiting. We believe that the vision and energy of PineTar Woods management, combined with its parent company's solid record of strict financial controls with an almost "human touch" in industries as varied as waste management and ore mining, heralds a new dawn in the fast-growing preadolescent and adolescent rural seasonal-recreation segment.

Watch for exciting news of PineTar Woods' future plans for the former Camp Idlehands and Blustery Winds facilities.

Meanwhile, all campers must be evacuated from these sites by twelve noon tomorrow. Stragglers will be prosecuted. ♦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NEW YORK JOURNAL

DEATH OF A FISH

The passing of a betta and the making of a child's mind.

BY ADAM GOPNIK

When our five-year-old daughter Olivia's goldfish, Bluie, died, the other week, we were confronted by a crisis larger, or, at least, more intricate, than is entirely usual upon the death of a pet. Bluie's life and his passing came to involve so many cosmic elements—including the problem of consciousness and the plotline of Hitchcock's "Vertigo"—that it left us all bleary-eyed and a little shaken.

To begin with, Bluie, as his name suggests, was not actually a goldfish. He was a betta, a goldfish-size fish that the people in pet stores encourage you to buy in place of the apparently tetchy and sickly true Asian goldfish. The betta is a handsome fish, with long, sweeping fins. It can be red or black or violet or blue, and it is, at least according to the pet-store people, the Vietcong of pet fish, evolved in rugged isolation in the rice-paddy puddles of Indochina and just about impossible to kill off. The only drawback is that male bettas fight with each other, and have to be kept apart. It is not surprising, these days, to see a set of them on a child's dresser in Manhattan, held in separate containers, in a kind of glass-bowl parody of the co-op apartment building that surrounds them, each fish furiously pacing its cubic foot of space and waiting for the other to turn up the stereo.

And then, in a deeper, damper sense, Bluie was not really a fish at all. He was, like so many New York fish and mice and turtles, a placeholder for other animals, which the children would have preferred to have as pets, but which allergies and age and sheer self-preservation have kept their parents from buying. Olivia and her ten-year-old brother, Luke, desperately want a dog, and at Christmas Olivia brought the class hamster, Hamu, home from her preschool as an experiment in pet-keeping. Hamu stayed with us for a mostly happy, if sometimes jittery, holiday week, and we reluctantly agreed to add a hamster to the family.

We went to the second floor of Petco, the mallish store on East Eighty-sixth Street, where all the rodents are kept together—rats and mice and guinea pigs and hamsters and gerbils. Looking at them, my wife, Martha, had a foreboding sense of what Darwin must have felt, looking at the Galápagos finches: that these things were not nearly so distinct as they had been trying to make you believe. A hamster and a guinea pig and a gerbil are all rats, and the differences, tails and no tails, cute noses and not, are really bells and whistles, niche-marketing gimmicks. Having spent twenty-five years of her New York life struggling to keep rodents out, Martha couldn't see spending time and money to bring one in.

So we talked the children into goldfish, and then the weary fish salesman talked us into bettas instead. ("The goldfish will die," he said, shortly. "Then what?") We bought them bowls and gravel and decorative architecture to swim around in, and took them home. Luke named his Django, and Olivia gave hers the descriptive name of Bluie. For a while, she seemed to accept his provisional, placeholding nature with equanimity.

For a pet condemned to live in so many brackets of meta-meaning, a fish passing as a hamster hoping to be a dog, Bluie had a pretty good life. In the constant struggle of parents of two children—one obviously large and one (especially to herself) irrefutably, infuriatingly small—to even life up, we got Bluie a castle, a bigger *objet* for his tank than we got for Django. It sat on the gravel, and rose almost to the surface—a Disney-like princess's residence, with turrets and castellations and plastic pennants. There was even a route from the base of the castle to the top turret which Bluie could swim up. A second betta, won at a street fair, joined Bluie on Olivia's dresser, but this new guy, named Reddie, had only a bowl to swim in. Reddie, we thought, kept pressing to the edge of his bowl to stare at Bluie's real estate with a certain resentment, the way a guy who lives in a condo on Broadway and teaches at City College might regard a colleague who writes best-sellers and lives in a penthouse on Central Park West.

One Sunday night, around bedtime, my wife called me into Olivia's room. Bluie was stuck in one of the windows of his castle, wriggling and huffing, with just his head out, looking ahead and trying to swim away. He wasn't supposed to be able to swim up there into the windows—he was supposed to stay within the channel in the castle. But the castle obviously had an architectural flaw.

"Bluie's stuck in the window!" Olivia cried.

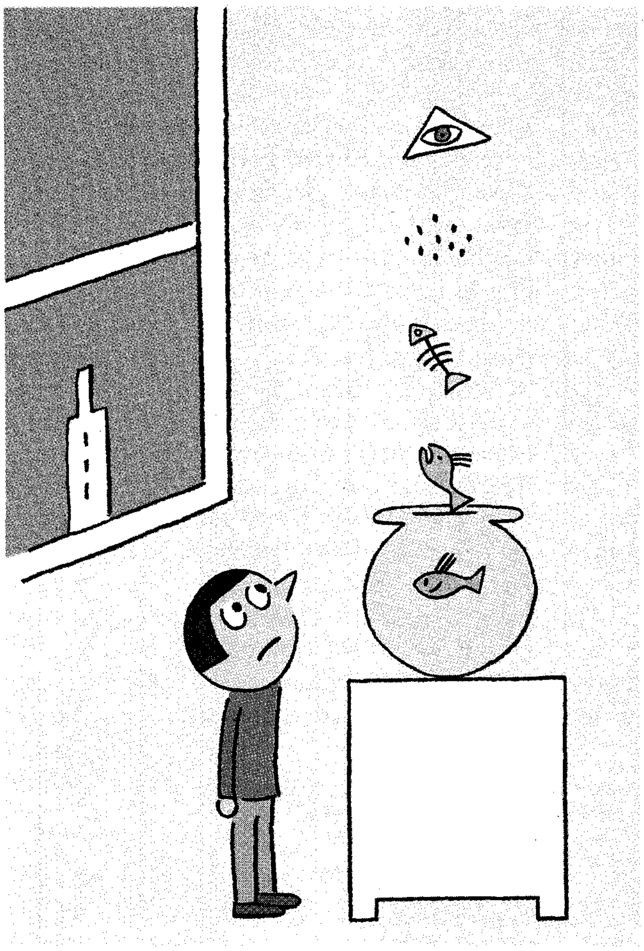
"Calm down, Olivia," Luke said. "He's just a fish."

"Bluie is my best friend," Olivia said. "I could tell him things I couldn't tell anyone else!" Until that moment, Bluie had seemed to be just a finny bit of décor, but at that moment, at least, he mattered to her, crucially.

I watched Bluie wriggling in his window, staring out, stuck. I felt for him, another victim of grandiose Manhattan real estate, undone by his own apartment. It was one of those moments, of which parenting is full, where you scream inside "I do not know what to do about this!" while the parent you are impersonating says calmly, "I'll fix it." I picked up Bluie's bowl and took him into the kitchen, leaving Martha to console Olivia.

I slid the kitchen door shut, and then reached into the water and tried gently to draw Bluie out of the window. I tugged lightly, and then realized that he was really wedged in. I tugged again, just a touch harder. Nothing. I saw that if I pulled at all firmly I was likely to rip his fins right off. I tried pushing him on the nose, urging him back out the way he came. Still nothing. He was stuck.

I looked around the kitchen. The remains of a sea bass that we had eaten for dinner—and that had doubtless had a lot more personality than Bluie ever did—rested on the counter, filleted skeleton and staring, reproachful head, waiting to be tossed out.



What does it feel like for a fish to be a fish?

PHILIPPE PETIT-ROUIET

"Why can't Bluie think, I got into this mess by swimming forward, I'll go back the other way?" Luke said. "It's like he doesn't have a rewind function in his brain."

He had slipped quietly into the kitchen beside me, and was watching, an intern to my baffled surgeon. Like many ten-year-olds, he is obsessed by what philosophers call the problem of consciousness but he calls the thinking and feeling thing. "Does Bluie know he's Bluie?" he would ask, when we watched the fish swimming in his bowl in Olivia's room. "I mean, I know he doesn't think, Oh, I'm Bluie! But what *does* he think—does he know he's *him* swimming around? Or is he just like a potato or something, only with fins, who swims but doesn't think anything?" What does it feel like, he wanted to know, to be a fish, a hamster, a monkey, a chimp? What does it feel like to be someone else?

When my sister, a developmental psychologist at Berkeley, came to visit, she sat Luke down and said, smoothly, that scientists once thought that life was a problem, but then they had not so much solved the problem as dissolved it, by understanding ever simpler forms of life. Luke's problem, why we know what it feels like to be alive, would probably dissolve into its parts, too. Luke had nodded, politely, but I could see he still held that the problem of thinking and feeling certainly felt like a problem when you thought about it.

"Swim backward, Bluie," I implored. "Get out of there."

Bluie, of course, did nothing but wiggle some more within his window.

"Is he thinking, I'm dying?" Luke asked at last.

Finally, I settled on a cowardly postponement of what even then I knew to be inevitable. I walked back to Olivia's room. "Let's take Bluie to Petco in the morning, and see if the experts there can help him," I said to Olivia as we tucked her in. "They've probably got a whole team of guys who are specialists in castle-extraction."

At five in the morning, I woke up to look in on Bluie. He was dead. I tried to think about what to do. I decided to take him out, still stuck in his castle window, and put him and the castle into a white plastic bag. Then I sat down to read at the kitchen table, in the gray light of the June Manhattan dawn, spring in Manhattan feeling so much more accelerated, so much quicker and time-lapsed and vivid than it does in any other city, a wave of pollen and warmth and renewal blowing in the window.

My sister had given me a kind of reading list to help me answer Luke's questions at a deep level, and I had read many of the philosophers who have something to say about his problem. I read David Chalmers, who thinks that consciousness is the ghost in the machine, the secret irreducible presence in the mind that distinguishes us from computers and goldfish and other creatures who provide only a zombie-like imitation of our self-knowledge. I read those philosophers who think that what we call consciousness is just an illusion, and bears the same relation to the workings of our real minds that the White House press spokesman bears to the workings of the Bush White House: it is there to find rationalizations and systematic reasons for feelings and decisions made by dim, hidden powers of whose pettish and irrational purposes it is aware only long after the fact.

Of all the theories that I came across, the most impressive was Daniel Dennett's. He argues that consciousness is a by-product, not a point—that it is just the sound that all those parallel processors inside our heads make as they run alongside one another, each doing its small robotic task. There is no "consciousness" apart from the working of all our mental states. Consciousness is not the ghost in the machine; it is the hum of the machinery. The louder the hum, the more conscious you feel. If Bluie had had a more interesting life, he would have known that he was having it. Bluie did not know that he was Bluie because there was not enough Bluie going on in his head to make being Bluie interesting even to Bluie.

Luke woke up and padded into the kitchen. He asked what had happened to Bluie, and I told him. We decided that we would bury Bluie before Olivia woke up, and then tell her that we had taken him to Petco. That would buy some time, anyway. I emptied Bluie's bowl, hid it in the closet of my office, and Luke and I got dressed. We carried Bluie, in his castle, in his white bag, down the hall to the trash room. We held our caps over our hearts as he went down the chute. Then I took Luke to school. He was silent on the way, but at the school door he turned to me.

"Dad, whatever you tell her, don't do a big Bluie's-in-the-fish-hospital thing," he counselled me. "*That* she'll never buy."

When I got home, I woke up Martha. "Bluie didn't make it," I whispered. "What are we going to do?"

"We're doing the full 'Vertigo,' " she announced, almost before her eyes were open. She had obviously been thinking about it since last night. "You're going to Petco and buying a fish that looks just like Bluie, and then we're going to put him in the fishbowl and tell her that it's Bluie. If it worked with Kim Novak, it can work with a betta."

She was referring, of course, to the plot of the fifties Hitchcock classic, which we had seen, as part of an impromptu Hitchcock festival, about a week before. In "Vertigo," James Stewart falls in love with a mysterious, cool blond beauty, played by Kim Novak, who he comes to believe is a mystical reincarnation of her long-dead great-grandmother, compelled to imitate her actions. When, like her great-grandmother, she launches herself to her death from a bell tower in a restored Mission town, Stewart is devastated. Haunted and desperate, he stumbles on a brunet shopgirl who looks eerily like Kim Novak, and forces her to dye her hair blond and dresses her in tailored gray suits, turning her into a precise replica of the Kim Novak character.

Actually, though, she is the Kim Novak character. She had been hired by the bad guy to play the part of the first Kim Novak character—another woman was thrown off that tower, as part of an insurance scam—and, to make it even odder, the fact that this is so is given away by the second Kim Novak character (in a flashback) right in the middle of the movie, so that the viewer, unlike poor Jimmy Stewart, is never in doubt about the reason the new Kim Novak looks like the old Kim Novak. The meaning of Hitchcock's choice to give away the key plot point in the middle of the movie, against the advice of everyone around him, is, I have discovered, a subject as much argued about among the *cinéastes* as the nature of consciousness is among the philosophers.

Martha went to wake Olivia and get her dressed for school.

"Bluie's in the fish hospital, darling," I heard her say. Boys and men don't believe in the fish hospital; mothers know that it is where all problems should be sent, while we wait to solve them.

"She'll just walk in, like Jimmy Stewart, and will be strangely reminded of Bluie—then he'll become Bluie for her," Martha said a few hours later, as we watched the new fish swim around in Olivia's tank, though I could tell that she was trying to reassure herself that this would work. I had gone to Petco and bought a Bluie look-alike. It was easy—the bettas all looked like Bluie.

But I was beginning to doubt that this was such a good idea. I remembered that in the movie Jimmy Stewart goes nuts, and Kim Novak ends up throwing herself off that bell tower for real.

"Are we doing the wrong thing?" I asked. "I mean, won't she figure out at ten or so that Bluie died?"

All this while, Martha, as a New York mother in crisis, had her cell phone cradled under her jaw. Everybody had had a dead-pet problem. Goldfish had floated to the tops of bowls; hamsters had been

"I can't wait to see what you're like online."

found dead in their cages, their furry feet upward; and more gruesome inter-pet homicides had taken place, too. Each family had a different tack, and a different theory. There were those who had gone the full "Vertigo" route, and regretted it; those who had gone the tell-it-to-'em-straight route, and regretted that. In fact, about all one could say, and not for the first time as a parent, is that, whatever one did, one regretted it afterward.

I made only one call, and that was to my sister, the developmental psychologist. She explained to me, instantly, that it was normal for children to develop intense attachments to pets, even "zombic" ones that did not reciprocate affection, and that a pair of Japanese psychologists, Hatano and Inagaki, had done studies of how children develop intuitive theories of biology by having pets.

"They claim that all kids, Western and Eastern, go from having primarily just psychology and physics to having a 'vitalist' biology right around age six," she told me. "That is, they start to think there is some vital spirit—you know, kind of like Chinese Chi—that keeps animals and humans alive, gets replenished by food, damaged by illness, and so on. And here's the cool thing. Hatano and Inagaki show, experimentally, that giving kids pet fish accelerates the development of this kind of vitalism. We give them fish as a learning device, though we don't know that when we do it. Olivia is probably in transition from a psychological conception of life to a biological one, which may be why she's so bewildered."

It seemed that the mere presence of a fish in a bowl, despite the barriers of glass and water and the fact of the fish's mindlessness, acted as a kind of empathy pump for five-year-olds, getting into the corners of their minds. Olivia was a vitalist, and Bluie was no longer vital. According to my sister, children's education proceeds in stages. At three, they're mostly psychologists, searching for a theory of mind; at six, they're biologists, searching for a theory of life. At ten, they're philosophers, searching to understand why our minds cannot make our lives go on forever.

"My sister doesn't think we're going to screw up Olivia's mind," I said to Martha a few moments later. "She does think that we're going to screw up her theories of biology." Martha was still watching

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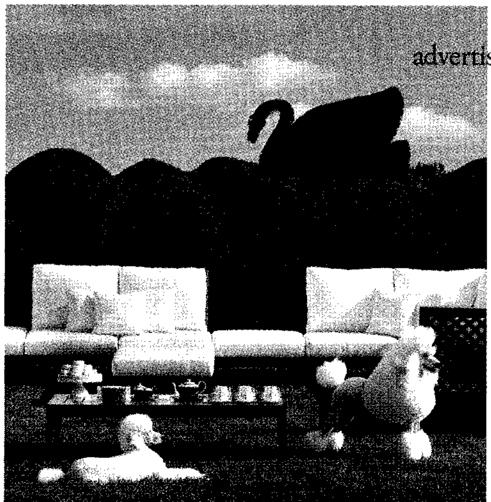
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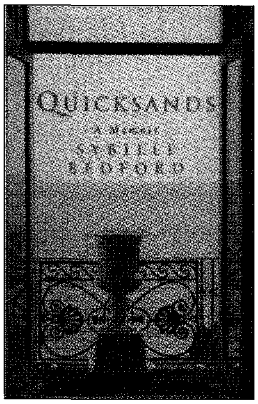

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COUNTERPOINT

the tank and trying to see if new Bluie would pass. "Olivia is going to think that dying things go away to Petco and come back as good as new."

Luke was the first one home. He studied the new fish, too. "Does new Bluie know that he's not Bluie?" he asked. Reddie was looking at new Bluie, but we couldn't even guess what he was thinking.

In the end, when Olivia came home from school, we did neither the ingenious Hitchcockian thing nor the honest brutal thing but, being New York liberals, the in-between, wishy-washy, split-the-difference thing. Martha told her that Bluie had been successfully extracted from his castle window by the fish specialists, but he had been so stressed by the experience that he was resting, and it might take a long time for him to recover. Meanwhile, they had given us Bluie's brother.

Olivia took one long, baleful look at the new Bluie.

"I hate this fish," she said. "I hate him. I want Bluie."

We tried to console her, but it was no use.

"But, look, he's just like Bluie!" we protested weakly.

"He looks like Bluie," she admitted. "He looks like Bluie. But he's not Bluie. He's a stranger. He doesn't know me. He's not my friend, who I could talk to."

That evening, we took turns staying up with her, sitting in the rocking chair in her room and rocking until she slept. The room, I realized, was full of Bluies: things that she had ascribed feelings and thoughts and intentions to, all the while knowing that they didn't really have them. There were Buzzes and Woodies, American Girl dolls, and stuffed animals from her infancy. Children, small children particularly, don't just have more consciousness than the rest of us. They *believe* in consciousness more than the rest of us; their default conviction is that everything might be able to think, feel, and talk. This conviction is one that entertainment companies both recognize and exploit, with talking toys and lovable sharks, though at some other level, of course, the children are entertained by them because they know it's all made up—no child believes that her own toys in her own bedroom talk like Woody and Buzz in the movie. Ascribing feelings to things is a way of protecting your own right to have feelings. Expanding the circle of consciousness extends the rule of feelings.

Olivia loved Bluie because it is in her nature to ascribe intentions and emotions to things that don't have them, rather as Hitchcock did with actresses. She knows that she is Olivia because one of the things that she is capable of doing is imagining that Bluie is Bluie. Though you read about the condition "mind-blindness" in autistic children, the alternative, I saw, was not to be mind-sighted. The essential condition of youth is to be mind-visionary: to see everything as though it might have a mind. We begin as small children imagining that everything could have consciousness—fish, dolls, toy soldiers, even parents—and spend the rest of our lives paring the list down, until we are left alone in bed, the only mind left.

And yet, though I had been instructed by my reading that we imagine minds as much as know them, I also realized, looking at the little girl who had cried herself to sleep, that the difference didn't quite matter. A pet is an act of empathy, a theory of love the child makes, but it is also a living thing, and when it dies it moves briefly but decisively outside the realm of thought, where everything can be given the shape of our own mind, and into the cold climate of physical existence, where things are off or things are on. Science might be dissolving life and mind into smaller parts, but among the higher animals, at least, with eyes and skeletons and hungers, the line between life and non-life is pretty much fixed and hard; from the other side of that window, no traveller, or goldfish, has yet come home to his bowl.

The real proof of consciousness is the pain of loss. Reddie, swimming in his studio, did not know that Bluie had gone; Bluie himself may in some sense not have known that he had gone. But Olivia did. The pain we feel is not the same as the hum we know, and it is the pain, not the hum, that is the price of being conscious, and the point of being human. I looked at the sleeping child, hoping that she would be over her grief in the morning.

"Mom," Luke said the next morning, "you shouldn't have done that big Bluie's-in-the-fish-hospital thing. It just stretched it out." The three of us were sitting at the kitchen table, waiting for Olivia to wake up.

"I *didn't* do a big Bluie's-in-the-fish-hospital thing," Martha objected, querulously. She was pretty tired. "I did a big Bluie's-in-the-rehab-clinic-right-next-to-the-fish-hospital thing."

"Well, that makes it worse," Luke said.

"Let's try this," Martha said. "Let's tell her that, though Bluie did die, this Bluie is kind of Bluie reborn."

I thought she might have something, and, in the next fifteen minutes, we did a quick, instinctive tour of the world's religions. We made up a risen-from-the-grave Christian story: the Passion of the Bluie. We considered a Buddhist story: Bluie goes round and round. We even played with a Jewish story: Bluie couldn't be kept alive by the doctors, but what a lovely bowl he left for his family!

Then we heard the door of Olivia's room open, and she came to the table, theatrically calm, and sat down. "I'm going to call the new fish Lucky," she announced. "And can I please have the Honey Nut Cheerios?" She knew that the Honey Nut Cheerios were, strictly speaking, off limits, but that no one was going to call her on it this morning.

It was, I thought, an inventive stroke. Did the name refer to new Bluie's unearned good fortune in getting a home after the death of the original Bluie? Or did it refer to his good fortune in being alive at all to swim around in the world a little longer? Certainly luck seemed like a wiser thing to celebrate in a fish than reincarnation.

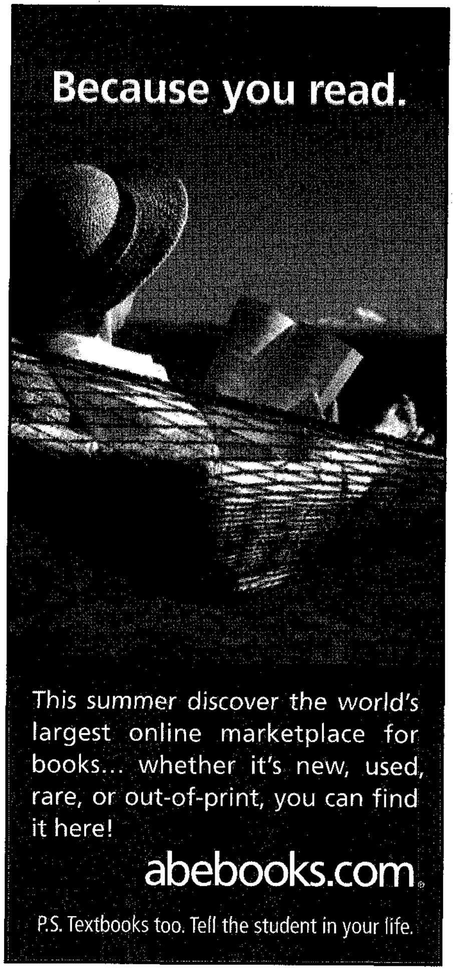
But then an odd thing happened. After a couple of days of everyone calling him Lucky, we noticed that Olivia, on her own, began to call the new fish Bluie. It was as if, having made a grand and instructive emotional tour, she had ended up right where she started. We begin with the problem of mind, pass through the experience of pain—and end up loving the same old fish.

I understood, suddenly, why Hitchcock had given the secret away in the middle of "Vertigo." The surprise is revealed because Hitchcock could not see what was surprising. He didn't think that there was anything bizarre in the idea of someone constantly being remade in the image of someone else's schemes or desires or weird plot points, because he thought that this is what life and love consist of. Suspense, not surprise, was the element Hitchcock swam in—not What next? but How will we get to the inevitable place again? Hitchcock himself, after all, did not adapt to circumstances. He made circumstances adapt to him. When Grace Kelly married a prince, there was Kim Novak, and when Kim Novak rebelled there was Tippi Hedren. Every five-year-old has one fish, as every great director has a single Blonde. What Hitchcock's films of the fifties have in common with all the world's religions is the faith that death can be overcome, or at least made tolerable, by repetitive obsession. First the mind, then the pain, and then the echo: that is the order of life. James Stewart learned this and now Olivia had, too.

Luke had a much more sinister view about what had happened to Bluie—less "Vertigo" and more "Psycho."

"What I think is," he said, "Reddie put Bluie up to swimming into that window, and then laughed inside when he saw what happened. It was, like, the Revenge of Reddie. He hated Bluie all this time for having a bigger house than he did, and finally tricked him to his death. Reddie is the bad guy, with all these plots and schemes. Look at him! He's the villain."

And for a moment or two, watching poor Reddie innocently swimming in his low-rent bowl, I did think I could see an evil gleam in his small fishy eye, a startling resemblance to Anthony Perkins in his drawn, nervous excitability and long-simmering rage. I watched him in slightly panicky wonder. He looked like a fish who knows his own mind. ♦



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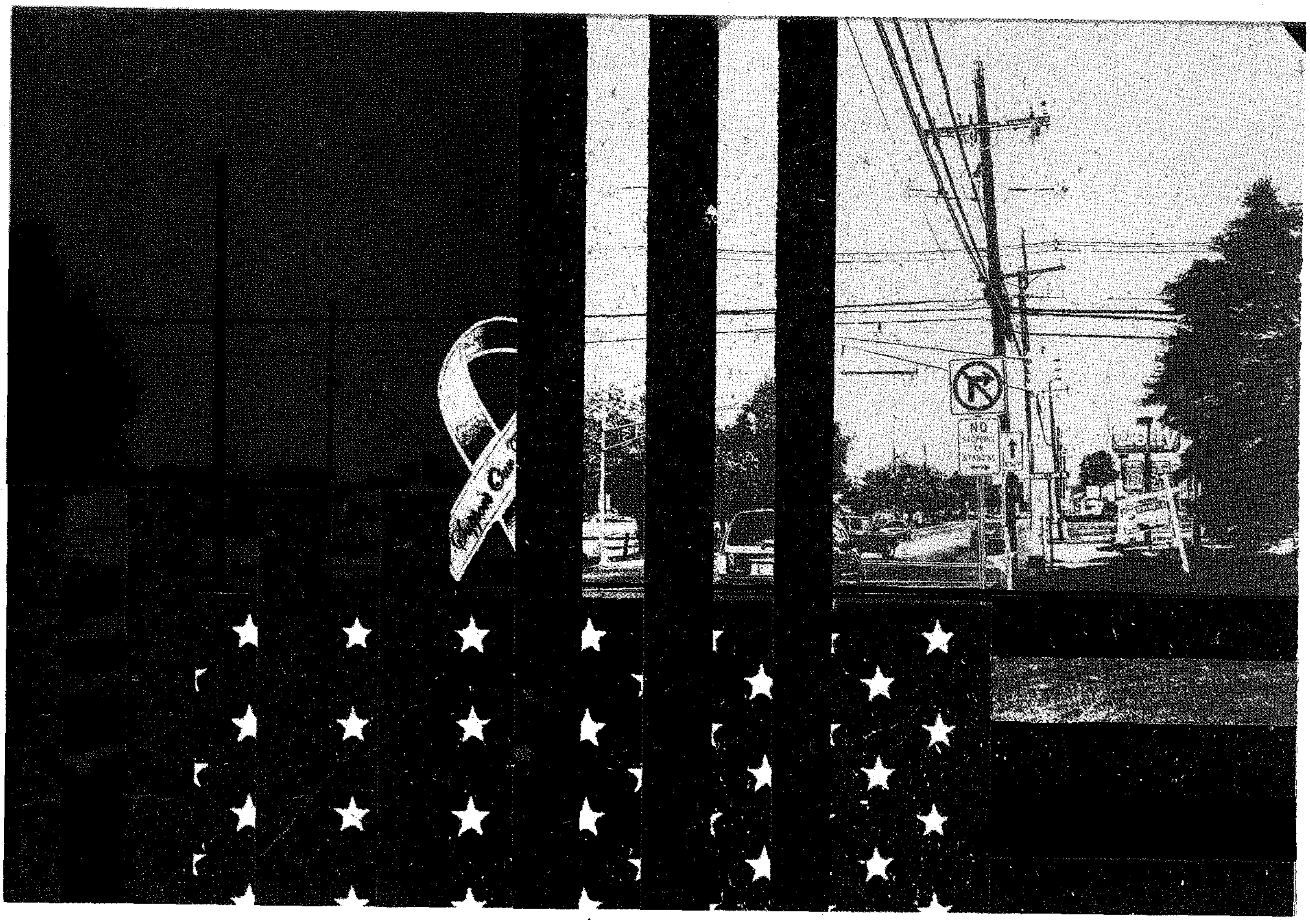


A REPORTER AT LARGE

THE HOME FRONT

A soldier's father wrestles with the ambiguities of Iraq.

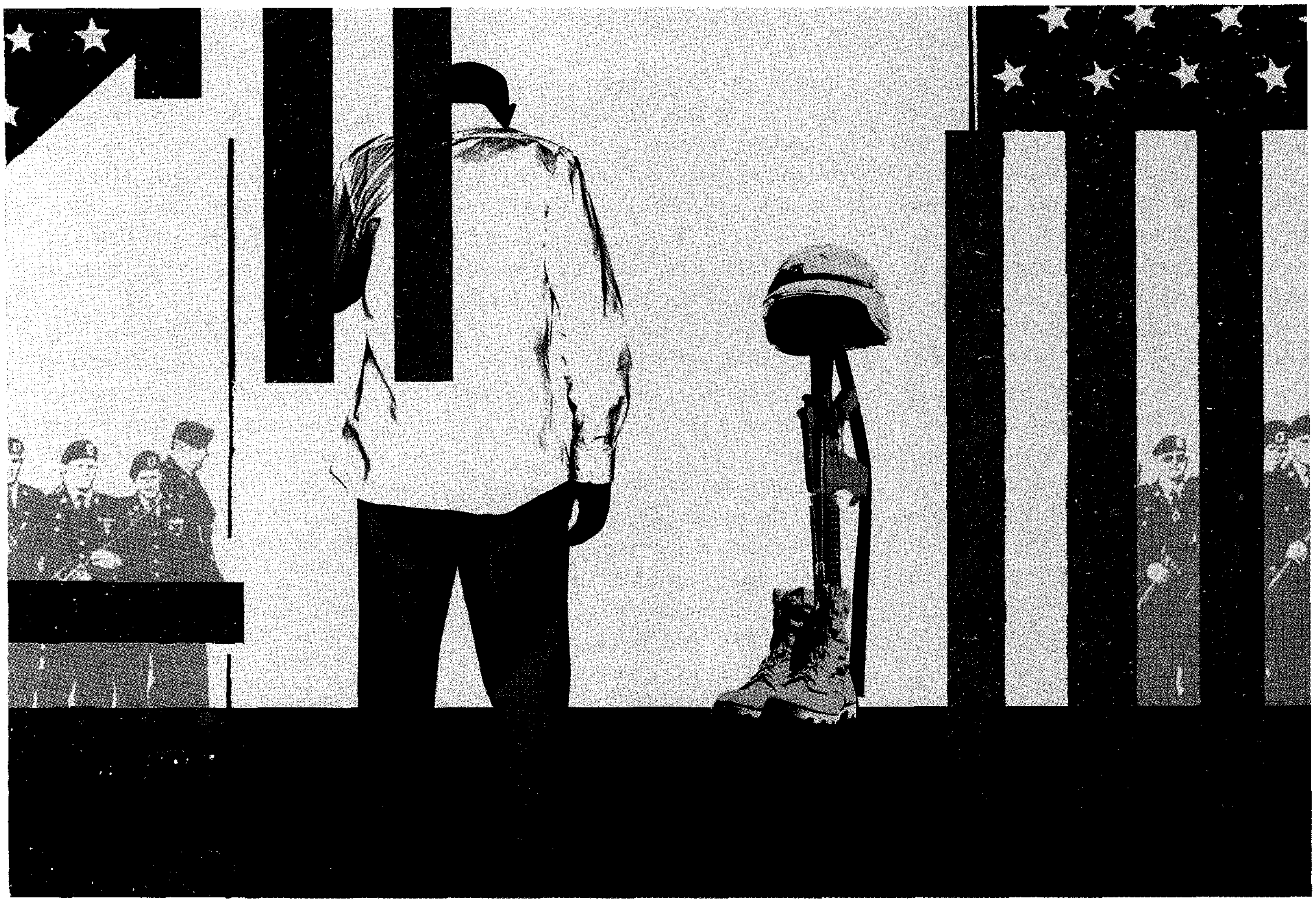
BY GEORGE PACKER

On November 8, 2003, at around 7:40 P.M., a convoy of two Humvees drove out of the front gate of the American base at Al Rashid Military Camp, in southeast Baghdad. The mission was to pick up a sergeant who was attending a meeting at the combat-support hospital inside the Green Zone, the secure area where the American-led occupation authority was situated. The convoy belonged to the scout platoon of Headquarters Company, 2-6 Infantry, First Armored Division. In the rear left seat of the lead vehicle sat a twenty-two-year-old private named Kurt Frosheiser.

Frosheiser was from Des Moines, Iowa. The son of divorced parents, he had a twin brother, Joel, and a married older sister, Erin. During high school, he had been a rebellious, indifferent student, and by the age of twenty-one he had become a community-college dropout, living with his sister and her family, delivering pizza, and partying heavily. He had a brash, boyish smile and his father's full mouth and thick-lidded eyes; he liked Lynyrd Skynyrd and the Chicago Cubs; and one day in January, 2003, he flew through the door with the news that he had just enlisted in the Army.

His father, Chris, who also lived in Des Moines, wasn't thrilled to hear it. The Frosheisers were not a military family; Chris, fifty-eight, a salesman's son from Chicago with a flat Midwestern accent, had joined the Army reserve in 1969, mainly to avoid going to Vietnam. But he wasn't the kind of father to impose his views on his children—he never pushed Kurt to share his own interest in history and politics—and he didn't try very hard to talk Kurt out of joining up. Their relationship was what mattered, and his son needed his support. A few weeks later, Kurt dropped by his father's apartment around two in the morning, after a night out drinking, and said, "I want to be part of something bigger than myself."

Kurt watched the invasion of Iraq on TV, looking, according to his sister, more serious than she had ever seen him. He had an option to get out of serving, but he left home on April 16th for basic training at Fort Knox, Kentucky. In June, the family drove down to see him on Family Day, and Chris was stunned by the transformation: his son stood at per-



JOHN RITTER

fect attention on Pershing Field for forty-five minutes in his dress uniform. It was the same in August, when they attended graduation: Private Frosheiser, marching, singing with his classmates, "Pick up your wounded, pick up your dead." Chris found the words chilling, but the music, the sharpness of the formation, the bearing of his son, filled him with pride. After the ceremony, Kurt told his father, "You weren't hard-core enough for me." Chris always lingered in the gray areas, asking questions; Kurt wanted the clear light of an oath and an order.

They all drove back to Des Moines for their last two weeks together before Kurt would join the First Armored Division, based in Baumholder, Germany. He partied every night, but the departure hung over everyone, and on the last night, when Erin dropped him off at one final party and turned to look at him, he said, "I know," and ran off.

Late that night, Kurt told his father, "Well, old man, I'm probably not going to see you for two years." They both started to cry, and Chris ran his hand through his son's crew cut. "I know I'm going to be in some deep shit," Kurt said. "But you know me, I'm a survivor." Chris knew that the words were meant only to comfort him. His son said, "Live your life, old man."

In Germany, Kurt was bored and eager to join the rest of the division, which was already in Iraq. Once, on the phone with his father, he noted that weapons of mass destruction might not be found. "We're fucked, aren't we?" he said. His father responded that there might be other reasons for the war, such as democracy in the Middle East. (Condoleezza Rice, the national-security adviser, had offered this rationale in a speech that Chris, a devoted viewer of C-SPAN, had seen.) Chris told him that the W.M.D. threat might just have been the easiest rationale to sell to the public. Kurt wasn't really interested in the politics of the war anyway. He was more concerned about confronting guerrilla warfare. His officers at Baumholder had warned the soldiers not to pick up trash bags, and not to take packages that kids would rush up to give them.

Suddenly, Kurt was on a transport plane to Kuwait, where he awaited deployment for a few days. By the end of October, he was in Baghdad. On November 6th, he managed to get online and e-mailed his sister:

> Our secter that we patrol is a good one we don't get shot at that much nor do we find IEDs (improvised explosive devices) thats their main way of attacking us. They usually put them in bags but now their putting them in dead animals or in concrete blocks to hide them better. It's kinda scary knowing their out there but like I said our secter is pretty secure so Ill be allright.

Writing to his father about his first mission in Baghdad, an uneventful night operation, Kurt was more explicit:

> I found myself thinking that Im in a country where a lot of soldiers lost their lives but where we at it was so quiet except all friggin dogs barking the Iraqis hate dogs so they're all wild probubly never had a bath their whole lives this country is a shit hole they dont have plumbing so they dig little canels and let all the shit and piss run into the streets . . . theyre places that smell so bad you almost throw up. from what I see its goin to take alot longer then Rumsfeld and G.W are saying to get this shit hole up and running.

He spoke to his father once, briefly, on the phone. "I.E.D.s, old man, I.E.D.s," he said.

On the evening of November 8th,

Kurt was sitting on his bunk, sorting and counting his ammunition, when word came of a mission to the combat-support hospital. He was training for his license as a Humvee driver, and he was eager to experience driving through Baghdad by night. In his short time with the battalion, he had earned a reputation as a hard worker who was quick to volunteer. He and his best friend in the unit, Private Matt Plumley, a Tennesseean, raced each other to the vehicle. Because the right rear door was hard to open, they both headed for the left. Kurt got there first.

The convoy left the base and began cruising north, toward downtown Baghdad. Five minutes later, on the left shoulder of the dark highway, thirty feet ahead of the convoy, two 130-mm. artillery shells packed with Russian C-4 explosives detonated, in a flash of light, black smoke, flying dirt. Hot chunks of shrapnel tore through the legs of the lead Humvee's driver, Private First Class Matt Van Buren, but he accelerated a few hundred yards along the highway, thinking that he would try to make it to the hospital. Then Staff Sergeant Darrell Clay, who was sitting next to him, told him to stop.

In the back of the Humvee, Kurt was slumped in his seat. Plumley checked Kurt's pulse, and found none. Kurt had been looking out the window, which had no glass. His head was turned to the left, and a small piece of metal had penetrated the right side of his skull just below his Kevlar helmet, breaching his brain. Private Kurt Frosheiser was taken by helicopter to the combat-support hospital in the Green Zone, where he was pronounced dead, at 8:17 P.M.

At six-thirty the next morning, a Sunday, the phone rang in Chris Frosheiser's cramped apartment, where he had been living since his divorce. The caller was a lieutenant colonel in the Iowa National Guard; he was two blocks away and trying to find the address. "I have a message from the Army," he said tersely. The previous week, Chris Frosheiser had asked an officer what to expect if something happened to Kurt; the officer had said that he would receive a phone call if Kurt was wounded, a visit if he had been killed. Frosheiser met the lieutenant colonel outside the building and invited him in, hoping it was all a mistake, and they briefly made small talk in the living room. Frosheiser went to the kitchen for a cup of coffee. When he returned, the lieutenant colonel suddenly stood at attention: "I regret to inform you that your son Kurt was killed as a result of action in Baghdad."

"Yeah, but for a fat guy who doesn't exercise I'm in pretty good shape."

On November 11th, Veterans Day, Kurt's battalion gathered in formation at the base in southeast Baghdad for a memorial service. A captain, Robert Swope, later wrote an account of the ceremony:

> At 1430 the ceremony is supposed to begin, but it doesn't start until 1448 because we have to wait for a couple generals to arrive. The memorial ceremony begins with an invocation by the chaplain, and then the battalion commander and the company commander both speak. Two privates who knew the soldier follow them. One of the privates chokes and starts tearing up while giving his tribute. I look around me out into a sea of sad faces and in the very back of the battalion formation I see that one of the female soldiers attached to our unit is crying.
>
> A bagpiper plays a crappy version of "Amazing Grace" and halfway through it doesn't even sound much like the song anymore. . . . The chaplain reads a few verses from the Bible, and then gives a memorial message and prayer. It's followed by a moment of silence.
>
> Then, the acting First Sergeant for the company does roll call, yelling out the names of various soldiers in the unit. They all answer, one after another, that they are present. When he comes to the private who died, everything is quiet.
>
> He calls out again his name, and still there is no answer. He does it a final time, using his full name and rank:
>
> "Private First Class Kurt Russell Frosheiser!"
>
> Silence.
>
> And then the mournful melody of "Taps" begins. Midway through the bugler begins slowly walking away, letting the music softly fade out in the distance. Seven soldiers with seven rifles fire off three series of blanks, giving Private Frosheiser a twenty-one-gun salute.
>
> When they're finished the battalion commander walks up to the memorial, which is an M-16 with a bayonet attached and driven into a wooden stand. Resting on top of the butt stock is a helmet and hanging down are a pair of dog tags with Kurt's name, social security number, blood type, and religion on them. Directly in front of the M-16 and in the center of the memorial stand sit a pair of tan combat boots. To the left and to the right are a bronze star and purple heart ensconced in their silk and velvet cases.
>
> This is the second time I've had to go to a ceremony like this so far this year, and I don't feel comfortable doing it. I walk up to the memorial the way I did last April for the other soldier in my company. I don't lower my head and pray or whisper anything, as so many

others do before me. I don't lean over and touch the tip of his boots like the sergeant major ahead of me just did. I just salute and then turn and walk away.

Chris Frosheiser initially wanted to escort his son's body back from Baghdad, or at least meet it at Dover Air Force Base, in Delaware. In the end, it was enough to receive the coffin at the Des Moines airport with thirty family members and friends and see Kurt's face one more time. At the wake, Frosheiser tried to say that his son's courage filled him with awe, but he wasn't able to express himself well. Kurt received a military funeral after a Catholic service, and was buried nearby, in Glendale Cemetery.

A few days before the funeral, Kurt's mother, Jeanie Hudson, had told the local paper, "He loved this land and its principles. He loved Iowa. It's an honor to give my son to preserve our way of life." She had become an evangelical Christian, and she said that Kurt had volunteered to fight the forces of evil. For Chris Frosheiser, this was too apocalyptic, suggesting some kind of religious war; he was a Catholic, but he thought that mixing politics and religion—whether Islam or Christianity—was dangerous. Anyway, Kurt had not spoken of the war this way. On the night after Kurt's death, Iowa's governor, Tom Vilsack, had called to offer condolences and said that he hoped the country's policies were as good as its people. Frosheiser was troubled by the thought that it might not be so. In January, 2004, one of Kurt's friends from Fort Knox wrote him in an e-mail, "I don't suppose he was in an up-armored HMMV, was he? Probably not, Uncle Sam wouldn't give us Joe's the good stuff." Frosheiser didn't know the answer, but thinking about it only deepened his grief.

Frosheiser dreamed that he was in the Army with Kurt. It was unclear whether they were father and son or friends; both of them were sitting on the right side of the Humvee and, when the explosion came, they fell out together and everything was O.K. He was nagged by the thought that he hadn't had time to send Kurt a book he had requested, Tolkien's "The Return of the King." On his wrist he wore Kurt's watch, still set to Baghdad time, with an alarm that went off at 6:30 A.M.—9:30 P.M. in Des Moines.

Frosheiser was a lifelong Democrat. In 1968, as a student at Drake University, he had supported Robert Kennedy for President. He couldn't identify with the antiwar movement, though; he thought that Vietnam was a terrible waste but not a reason to hate your country. Even the Eugene McCarthy campaign struck him as too élite, too unconventional, and when McCarthy said that Kennedy was "running best among the less intelligent and less educated people" it touched the resentful nerve of a lower-middle-class college kid. The Tom Haydens of the world were going to make it no matter how they spent their youth; the Chris Frosheisers had to be more careful.

He didn't join the backlash that elected Nixon and Reagan, however; he remained a liberal, mostly on economic grounds. For many years, he worked in the insurance business without enthusiasm; in 1993, he started a new career, as the Salvation Army's director of social services in Des Moines. "I wanted to do something more meaningful—kind of like Kurt," Frosheiser said. Meanwhile, he had grown increasingly unhappy with the "weakness" of Democratic leaders and the anti-military views of much of the Party's base. After Kurt's enlistment and then his death, the feeling deepened into estrangement. Frosheiser venerated those who put on a uniform and served. He was uneasy with friends who called Iraq "another Vietnam," and he couldn't tolerate hearing that Kurt's life had been wasted. When a local Catholic peace group got in touch to offer condolences and let him know that Kurt's picture, along with those of other fallen Iowans, would be on display at a weekly candlelight vigil, Frosheiser told the group not to use Kurt's photograph. But when he bought a long-life candle at a Christian bookshop and told the cashier that it was for his son's grave, and she said, "Thank you for your sacrifice," that, too, sounded wrong.

That winter, in the Iowa caucuses, Frosheiser supported Senator John Edwards; he had misgivings about John Kerry. When a friend called Kerry's vote against the eighty-seven-billion-dollar war appropriation a "protest vote," Frosheiser said, "Kind of a serious issue to be casting protest votes on." He wondered if Kerry could hold steadfast in Iraq under pressure from the Party's dissenting base. If not, what would Kurt's death mean then? When President Bush said in a speech, "We will hold this hard-won ground," he found the language inspiring. Kerry's rhetoric did not inspire him. Frosheiser kept remembering Lincoln's 1862 Message to Congress: "As our case is new, so we must think anew, and act anew. We must disenthrall ourselves, and then we shall save our country." He longed to hear words like these from a wartime leader; politics required the art of explanation. But Bush, who had made so many mistakes, was unable to admit or see his errors, even as the war was getting worse; he had the best education money could buy, but he seemed to know little about the world. Frosheiser admired men who seemed driven more by patriotism than by ideology, such as Thomas Kean and Lee Hamilton, of the 9/11 Commission, and Senators Joe Lieberman and John McCain. Iraq was too important to be left to the partisans.

Not long after Kurt's death, Chris Frosheiser read a piece I wrote for this magazine about Kurt's battalion. Frosheiser was looking for some way to comprehend Kurt's short life and his death in Iraq. After I got back from Iraq, we began a correspondence by e-mail. Frosheiser's letters were full of the restless questions, the constant return to the same inconclusive themes, of a man who has suffered a trauma and is determined to feel every contour of it:

APRIL 1, 2004: Democrats need a foreign policy and a national security strategy to back it up. . . . Now, I have gone on too long and not answered your questions very well. It shows my ambivalence and the difficulty in talking beyond the personal. Sorry. May I write more later? I can't go on now. . . . I have reread Truman's "Truman Doctrine" speech and Marshall's Harvard Commencement speech of June 1947. I admired them and those policies. I must avoid bitterness. In honor of Kurt and the other soldiers, bitterness seems inappropriate.

MAY 15, 2004: Sometimes I think about Kurt being in Baghdad, Iraq, as part of something called "Operation Iraqi Freedom." Kurt said he wanted to be a part of something larger than himself. He was in the middle of something so huge it nearly defies understanding. There is more to be said about this, I just don't know what it is. My son died for something. And there is honor in simply enlisting, let alone serving in Iraq.

AUGUST 28, 2004: Next Tuesday, George Bush will be campaigning near Des Moines, in a farm community called Alleman, Iowa. Apparently, the campaign invited us as Kurt's family to be there. Joel and I talked about it and Erin too. And we will attend. It is a tribute to Kurt, I think. It may or may not be construed as support for Bush. But, you know, I will put my Democratic loyalty up against anyone's. As a tribute to Kurt I am entitled to shake hands with the President. Besides, it is still a bit odd I think that very little was said to me, a loyal Democrat, by leading Democrats, about Kurt's service. I know a guy who was the state party chair and who was an early Edwards supporter. I had expressed an interest in talking to Edwards about Kurt's service. It was never arranged. I thought someone like Edwards should speak to someone who lost a child in combat. Is there a larger issue exposed here? About Democrats and the soldiers? Sometimes it feels like I don't have a party. John Kerry did send a card to both Jeanie and me, but I really think there is an ill-at-ease sense among activist Democrats about the "warriors" because of opposition to the war.

SEPTEMBER 5, 2004: In follow-up to my previous e-mail about meeting Dubya, it didn't happen. Out of a sense of obligation to honor Kurt, to receive his Commander in Chief's offer of tribute and condolences I went. We were just part of the crowd. . . . We did get to hear the "stump speech," a longer version of which he gave to the Convention. He speaks of the "war against terror" as if it includes Iraq, no distinguishing between them. . . . I will be happy when the election is over. I can't take much more of the hyperbolic bullshit!

SEPTEMBER 11, 2004: Grandson Colin spent the night last night. We ate popcorn, visited Borders, watched Star Wars, and this morning took a dip in the pool (a bit cool). Life goes on, ready or not. I have to say that Kurt is never out of my thoughts. Ever. That may not be healthy but it is the way it is. I am 57 years old, George, I may never fully recover from this. And maybe I shouldn't.

OCTOBER 4, 2004: A better Iraq? Is it possible? Why did we go into Iraq? What justifies our remaining? American lives have been lost, precious lives, for what? Can something be achieved that is worthy of the sacrifice? Are there things not known to anyone other than the President and his advisers? No one in the Senate or any of the "attentive" and "informed" organizations? That would justify the sacrifice? And how much more sacrifice can be justified? For us to turn Iraq over to civil war would be hard to take. I don't have the right to advocate continued involvement because of my sacrifice—that would lead to more, many more. What is best for America and Iraq? What is reality on the ground in Iraq? What is possible to achieve? Can Kerry and a team of his choosing do it? It is a great leap of faith.

And most of the time none of this matters to me. I want my son. My son.

PORTRAIT OF MAN WRITING

While you paint me, I marvel at your skin.
The miracle of being twenty-four
Is there like a first blush as you touch in
The blemishes that make my face a war
I'm losing against time. So you begin,
By lending inwardness to an outline,
Your life in art as I am ending mine.

Try not to miss the story my mouth tells,
Even unmoving, of how once it had
The knack for spinning yarns and casting spells,
And had to make an effort to seem sad.
These eyes that look as crusty as dry wells,
Despite the glue they seep, once keenly shone.
Give them at least a glimmer of what's gone.

I know these silent prayers fall on deaf ears:
You've got integrity like a disease.
Bound to record the damage of the years,
You aim to tell the truth, and not to please.

The home front of the first two years of the Iraq war was not like that of the Second World War, and it was not like that of Vietnam. It didn't unite Americans across party lines against an existential threat. (September 11th did that, but not Iraq.) There were no war bonds, no collection drives, no universal call-up, no national mobilization, no dollar-a-year men. Nor did the war tear the country apart. Almost as soon as it began, the American antiwar movement quietly capitulated. On the first and second anniversaries of the invasion, there were large demonstrations in Europe and parts of the Middle East and Asia, but in this country organized opposition was muted by the imperative to support the troops. Candlelight vigils like the one in Des Moines, which displayed the photographs of fallen Iowans, strived for a tone of respectful dissent.

In the media, Iraq generated words as bitter as any event in modern American history. But most Americans didn't turn against other citizens, any more than they joined together in a common cause. Iraq was a strangely distant war. It was always hard to picture the place; the war didn't enter the popular imagination in songs that everyone soon knew by heart, in the manner of previous wars. The one slender American novel that the war has inspired so far, "Checkpoint," by Nicholson Baker—a dialogue over lunch in a Washington hotel room between two old friends, one of whom is preparing to assassinate President Bush—has nothing to do with Iraq and everything to do with the ugliness of politics in this country. Michael Moore, the left's answer to Rush Limbaugh, made a hugely successful movie, "Fahrenheit 9/11," in which Saddam's Iraq was portrayed in a crudely fantastical light—a happy place where children flew kites. Iraq provided a blank screen onto which Americans projected anything they wanted, in part because so few Americans had anything directly at stake there. The war's proponents and detractors spoke of the conflict largely in theoretical terms: imperialism, democracy, unilateralism, weapons of mass destruction, preëmption, terrorism, totalitarianism, neoconservatism, appeasement. The exceptions were the soldiers and their families, who carried almost the entire weight of the war.

Whereas the street fights of the late nineteen-sixties were the consequence of Vietnam, the word fights of this decade were not the consequence of Iraq—if anything, it was the other way around. It was the first blogged war, and the characteristic features of the form—instant response, ad-hominem attack, remoteness from life, the echo chamber of friends and enemies—helped define the tone of the debate about Iraq. One of the leading bloggers, Andrew Sullivan, responded to the news of Saddam's capture, in December, 2003, by writing, "It was a day of joy. Nothing remains to be said right now. Joy." He had just handed out eleven mock awards to leftists who expressed insufficient happiness or open unhappiness at the news. In response to an Iraqi blog-

And so this other man slowly appears
Who is not me as I would wish to be,
But is the me that I try not to see.

Suppose while you paint me I wrote of you
With the same fidelity: people would say
That not a line could possibly be true.
Nobody's lips in real life glow that way.
Silk eyelashes! Is this what he's come to?
Your portrait, put in words, sounds like a lie,
Despite the facts a glance would verify.

But do we credit beauty even when
It's there in front of us? It stops the heart.
The mortal clockwork has to start again,
Ticking towards the day we fall apart,
Before we see now all we won't have then.
Let's break for lunch. What progress have we made?
Ah, yes. That's me exactly, I'm afraid.

—*Clive James*

ger's declaration of heartfelt thanks to the coalition forces, Sullivan, sitting at his computer in Washington, wrote, "You're welcome. . . . The men and women in our armed forces did the hardest work. They deserve our immeasurable thanks. But we all played our part." Sullivan's joy was, in fact, vindictive and narcissistic glee. (He has since had second thoughts about the Administration's conduct of the war.) Similarly, as the insurgency sent Iraq into tumult most antiwar pundits and politicians, in spite of the enormous stakes and the awful alternatives, showed no interest in helping Iraq become a stable democracy. When Iraqis risked their lives to vote, Arianna Huffington dismissed the elections as a "Kodak moment." It was Bush's war, and, if it failed, it would be Bush's failure.

Iraq was too complicated for the simple answers each political side offered. The American invasion brought death, chaos, and occupation to Iraq; it also ended a terrible tyranny and ushered in the possibility of hope. American forces achieved local successes in rebuilding infrastructure and setting up new institutions of government; they also lost ground every day in the estimation of Iraqis. The war had something to do with national security, something to do with oil, and something to do with democracy. Few Iraqis I met felt compelled to rifle through the contradictions and settle on one story line; many of them acknowledged that America, while ridding them of Saddam, had acted out of its own self-interest. But in America there were comparatively few people who could handle the kind of cognitive dissonance with which Iraqis lived every day.

Some journalists visited Iraq simply to reinforce their preconceptions. In the summer of 2003, Christopher Hitchens, who had just published a book with the premature title "A Long Short War: The Postponed Liberation of Iraq," flew in with the entourage of Paul Wolfowitz, the Deputy Secretary of Defense, spent several days in Wolfowitz's wake, and came back to tell Fox News that the postwar reconstruction was succeeding splendidly, with the Americans busy rebuilding the place, gathering intelligence, apprehending Baathists, and making friends with the people—none of which was appearing in press coverage. "I felt a sense of annoyance that I had to go there myself to find any of that out," Hitchens told the Fox interviewer. The following March, with the long short war showing signs of turning into a short long war, Fred Barnes, the executive editor of the strenuously pro-war *Weekly Standard*, parachuted into the Green Zone and discovered that the only thing wrong with Operation Iraqi Freedom was Iraqis. "They need an attitude adjustment," Barnes wrote. "Americans I talked to in ten days here agree Iraqis are difficult to deal with. They're sullen and suspicious and conspiracy-minded." Before the invasion, hawks like Barnes had described Iraqis as heroic figures, but now something had to explain all the bumps in the road. A successful democracy would emerge in Iraq, Barnes said, only after "an outbreak of gratitude for the greatest act of benevolence one country has ever done for another." Naomi Klein, a columnist for the bitterly antiwar *Nation*, visited Baghdad at the same time as Barnes and found that the insurgency was mushrooming because the occupation authority was "further opening up Iraq's economy to foreign ownership"—in other words, because Iraqis shared her own anti-globalization views.

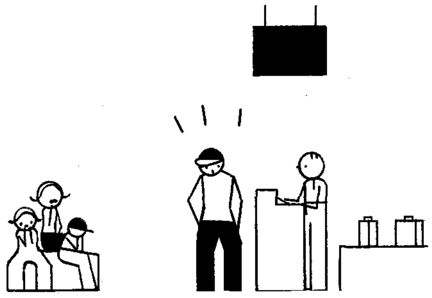
America had become too politically partisan, divided, and small-minded to manage something as vast and difficult as Iraq. Condoleezza Rice and other leading officials liked to compare Iraq with postwar Germany. But there was a great gulf between the tremendously thoughtful effort of the best minds that had gone into defeating Fascism and rebuilding Germany and Japan, and the peevish, self-serving attention paid to Iraq. One produced the Army's four-hundred-page manual on the occupation of Germany; the other produced talking points.

In the aftermath of September 11th, President Bush was granted what few Presidents ever get: national unity and the good will of both parties. In the days that followed the terror attacks, something like a popular self-mobilization emerged. Yet President Bush did nothing to harness the surge of civic energy, or to frame the new war against Islamist radicalism as a national struggle. The war on terror should have been the job not only of experts in the intelligence agencies and Special Forces but also of ordinary American citizens. And the war demanded more than a military campaign—it required intellectual, diplomatic, economic, political, and cultural efforts as well. "The Bush Administration has chosen to prosecute this war in a way that the average citizen won't feel the burden," Andrew Bacevich, a professor of international relations at Boston University and a retired Army officer, told me. "The global war on terrorism, a task that's supposed to be equal to that of the greatest generation, is being fought by 0.5 per cent of the citizenry—predominantly people who don't exercise a lot of clout in our domestic politics." Bacevich, in his recent book "The New American Militarism," proposes reviving the role of the citizen-soldier by, for example, tying college scholarships to national military service. "The political leadership of the country needs to expend political capital to make clear that support for the global war on terrorism must come from all sectors of society," he said. "Then they need to put their money where their mouth is and encourage their children to join. If this is such a great cause, let us see one of the Bush daughters in uniform. That would send a powerful message. But it's considered in bad taste even to suggest such a thing."

Bush's rhetoric sometimes soared, but his actions showed that he had a narrow strategy for fighting the war, which amounted to finding and killing terrorists and their supporters. His other political agendas, such as tax cuts and energy policy, stirred bitter fights and disrupted the clarity and unity of September 11th. Whatever national cohesion that remained by mid-2002 came undone in the buildup to the invasion of Iraq. The White House forced a congressional vote on a war resolution one month before the 2002 midterm elections, in an atmosphere of partisan invective; Republicans on the floor of the House and Senate accused their dissenting Democratic colleagues of Chamberlain-like appeasement of Saddam. Meanwhile, Senator Joseph Biden, the Democratic chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, working with his Republican colleague Richard Lugar, drafted a war resolution that stood a better chance of getting bipartisan support; it placed a few constraints on the Administration's ability to act, making it slightly less likely that America would go to war without international participation. The White House maneuvered to block the Biden-Lugar bill and got its own passed, on a more partisan vote. The strategy of Bush's political adviser Karl Rove paid off in November, when the Republicans regained the Senate and added to their majority in the House. But the Administration left behind an embittered Democratic minority and an increasingly divided electorate, just as it was preparing to take the country into a major land war.

In the fall of 2002, it still might have been possible for President Bush to construct an Iraq policy that united both parties and America's democratic allies in defeating tyranny in Iraq. Such a policy, however, would have required the Administration to operate with flexibility and openness. The evidence on unconventional weapons would have had to be laid out without exaggeration or deception. The work of U.N. inspectors in Iraq would have had to be supported rather than undermined. Testimony to Congress would have had to be candid, not slippery. Administration officials who offered dissenting views or pessimistic forecasts would have had to be heard rather than silenced or fired. American citizens would have had to be treated as grownups, and not, as Bush's chief of staff, Andrew Card, once suggested, as ten-year-olds.

After the invasion, European allies would have had to be coaxed into joining an effort that desperately needed their help. French, German, and Canadian companies would have had to be invited to bid on reconstruction contracts, not barred by an order signed by Paul Wolfowitz (who once wrote that American leadership required "demonstrating that your friends will be protected and taken care of, that your enemies will be punished and that those who refuse to support you will live to regret having done so"). American contractors close to the Pentagon would have had to be subjected to extraordinary scrutiny, to avoid even the appearance of corruption. The U.N. would have had to be brought into Iraq as an equal partner, not as a tool of American convenience. The top American civilian in Iraq might even have had to be a Democrat, or a moderate Republican such as the retired general Anthony Zinni, whom a senior Administration official privately described as the best-qualified person for the job. ("You've got to rise above politics," the official told me. "You've got to pick the best team. You've got to be like Franklin Roosevelt.") The occupation authority would have had to favor hiring not political appointees but competent, non-partisan experts. It would have had to put the interests of Iraqi society ahead of the White House agenda.



And when no weapons of mass destruction were found in Iraq the Administration would have had to admit it. The President would have had to scratch evasive formulations like "weapons of mass destruction-related program activities" from his State of the Union address. Officials and generals who were responsible for scandal and failure would have had to be fired, not praised or promoted. When reporters asked the President to name one mistake he had made in Iraq, he would have had to name five, while assuring the country that they were being corrected. He would have had to summon all his rhetorical skill to explain to the country why, in spite of the failure to find weapons, ending tyranny in Iraq and helping it to become a pioneering democracy in the Middle East was morally correct, important for American security, and worthy of a generational effort. In fact, he would have had to explain this *before* the war, when the inspectors were turning up no sign of weapons, and thus allow the country to have a real debate about the real reason for the war, so that when the war came it would not come amid rampant suspicions and surprises, and America would not be alone in Iraq.

The Administration's early insistence on Iraq's imminent threat to national security later made it difficult for many Americans to accept broader arguments about democracy. "What would be worth it?" Chris Frosheiser asked. "W.M.D. imminence? Yeah. Linked to Al Qaeda? Yeah. After that? We're concerned about humanitarianism in Iraq, and the Kurds and all. But democracy in Iraq?" He wasn't so easily convinced.

What prevented open and serious debate about the reasons for war was, above all, the character of the President. Bush's war, like his Administration, was run with an absence of curiosity and self-criticism, and with a projection of absolute confidence. He always conveyed the impression that Iraq was a personal test. Every time a suicide bomber detonated himself, he was trying to shake George W. Bush's will. If Bush remained steadfast, how could America fail? He liked to call himself a wartime President, and he kept a bust of his hero Winston Churchill in the Oval Office. But Churchill led a government of national unity and offered his countrymen nothing but blood, toil, tears, and sweat. Bush relentlessly pursued a partisan Republican agenda while fighting the war, and what he offered was optimistic forecasts, permanent tax cuts, and his own stirring resolve.

I asked Richard Perle, the former chairman of the Defense Policy Board and a leading war proponent, whether top Administration officials ever suffered doubts about the Iraq War. "We all have doubts all the time," Perle said. "We don't express them, certainly not in a public debate. That would be fatal." Expressing doubts in public would empower opponents. In public, Perle himself essentially said, "I told you so." Soon after the invasion, he told a French documentary filmmaker, "Most people thought there would be tens of thousands of people killed, and it would be a long and very bloody war. I thought it would be over in three weeks, with very few people killed. Now, who was right?" As the war became longer and bloodier, Perle was still right, but in a different way: If only ten thousand Iraqi National Congress members had gone in with the Americans as he had wanted, if only Ahmad Chalabi had been installed at the head of an interim government at the start, all these problems could have been avoided. None of the war's architects publicly uttered a syllable of self-scrutiny.

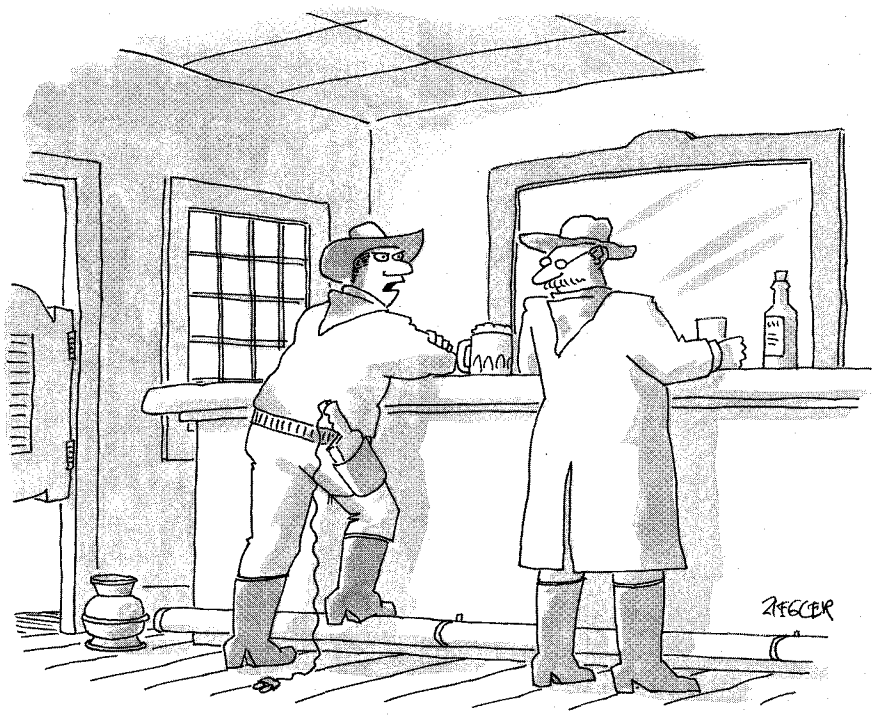
Leslie Gelb worked in the Pentagon during the last years of the Johnson Presidency, and he directed the writing of the Pentagon Papers, the secret history of the Vietnam War which had been commissioned by Robert McNamara, the Defense Secretary, before leaving office. I expressed my doubts to Gelb that Donald Rumsfeld, Bush's Defense Secretary, had commissioned a secret history of the Iraq war. "You can bet your bippy," Gelb said, laughing. "It's not accidental that President Bush, during the campaign, couldn't answer the question whether he ever made a mistake. I've never seen those folks say they were wrong. Vietnam was a liberals' war. This is not." Comparing Bush to his own boss, Gelb went on, "Johnson was a tragic figure. He was driven by the imperative not to lose the war. He knew he couldn't win. Bush is Johnson squared, because he thinks he can win. Bush is the one true believer, a man essentially cut off from all information except the official line."

Chris Frosheiser once told me, "I don't expect to hear Bush say he made a mistake, but I want to hear something that shows he knows what the hell he's doing. And I still don't hear that from him. That gets back to the soldier's oath." He was referring to the oath of personal obedience that Kurt had sworn to the Commander-in-Chief. "It implied that the President must be very wise and knowledgeable and have foresight before deploying men, because he's going to be responsible for them."

The strategy of projecting confidence served the President well in domestic politics. Steadfastness in wartime is an essential quality, and after the 2004 election no one could reasonably doubt his ability as a politician. For him, the result also proved his critics wrong. "We had an accountability moment, and that's called the 2004 election," Bush said. But in Iraq, which had a reality of its own, the approach didn't work as well.

When Bush spoke—as he did in his acceptance speech at the Republican Convention in September, 2004, and again in his inaugural address in January, 2005—about the power of freedom to change the world, he sounded deep notes in the American psyche. But Iraq itself, which was visibly deteriorating, looked nothing like the President's exalted vision. Bush's assertions that the war was succeeding forced the entire government to fall in line or risk the White House's wrath. So agencies sometimes issued prettified reconstruction reports—even when Iraq's electricity grid remained in terrible shape. War is less tolerant of untruth than domestic politics is. Bush's imperviousness to unpleasant facts actually made defeat in Iraq more likely.

Sir Jeremy Greenstock, Britain's envoy in Baghdad, watched governments in Washington and London try to bend Iraq to their own political needs and concluded that the Coalition Provisional Authority was hampered by its creators. "You have to make decisions judged against the criteria within and about Iraq, not within and about any other political context," Greenstock told me. "If you want



"I broncobust and I Dust-Bust. You got a problem with that?"

the American and British publics to be happy about the results in Iraq, you don't say, 'What do they want next?' You look at Iraq, and you produce the substance that will make them happy. You don't produce the presentation that might make them happy tomorrow."

When Bush's first chief of the postwar operation, the retired general Jay Garner, was replaced by L. Paul Bremer III and recalled from Iraq, in May, 2003, he was taken by Rumsfeld to the White House for a farewell meeting with the President. The conversation lasted forty-five minutes, he told me, with Vice-President Dick Cheney and Rice sitting in for the second half, and yet the President did not take the chance to ask Garner what it was really like in Iraq, to find out what problems lay ahead. When Garner had come back from northern Iraq in 1991, after leading the effort to save Kurdish refugees following the Gulf War, he had answered questions for four or five days.

Bush thanked Garner for his excellent service. Garner told Bush, "You made a great choice in Bremer." Garner's end-of-duty report had assured the President that most services in Iraq would be restored within a few weeks. Anyone listening to the conversation could only conclude that Operation Iraqi Freedom was a triumph.

"You want to do Iran for the next one?" the President joshed as the meeting came to an end.

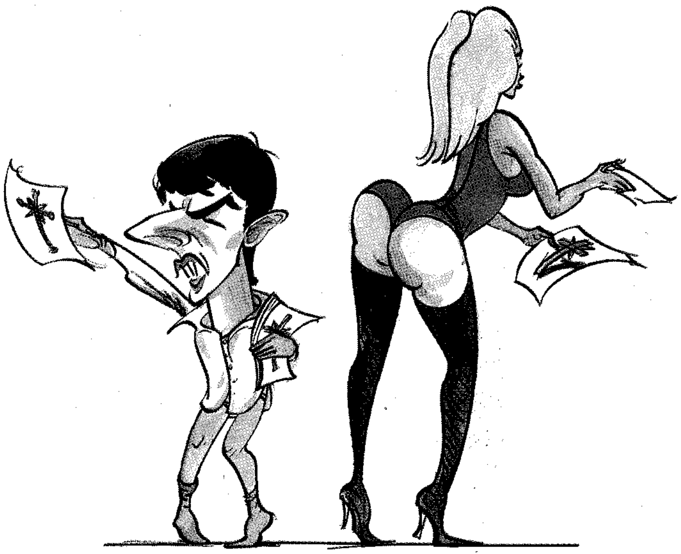
"No, sir, me and the boys are holding out for Cuba," Garner said.

Bush laughed and promised Garner and the boys Cuba.

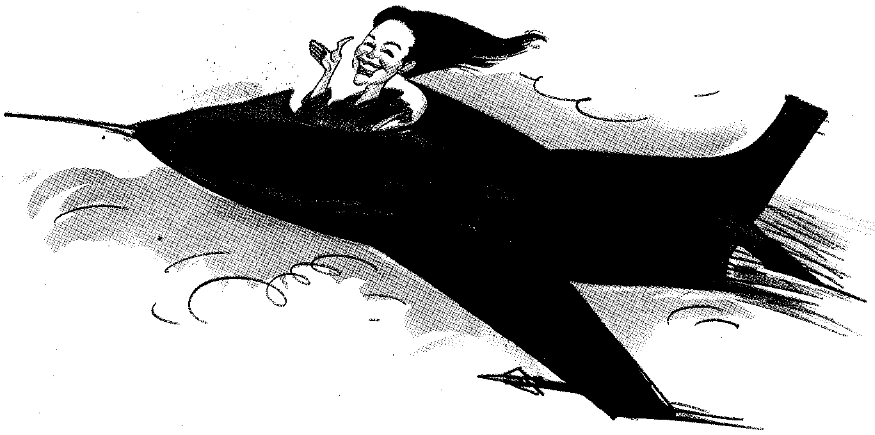
Garner shook hands with the President, then with the Vice-President, who had said nothing the whole time. He told me that he caught Cheney's "wicked little smile" on his way out, adding, "I think the President only knows what Cheney lets in there."

On the day before the 2004 election, the senior Administration official told me that Bush "was enshrouded by yes-men and yes-women. George Tenet"—the former director of the C.I.A.—"is at the top of the list: people who can smell the political angle and furnish the information that will give the President what the political angle is. No one ever walks into the Oval Office and tells them they've got no clothes on—and persists." He went on, "I think it's dangerous that

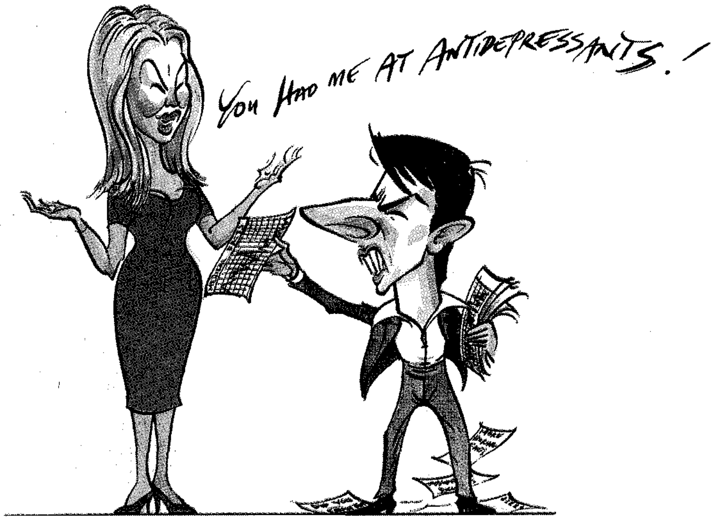
Cruise Control



Films new ending for "Risky Business": Joel's parents' house is not only a bordello but a Scientology recruitment center.



Addresses concerns about romantic subtext in "Top Gun" by digitally replacing Val Kilmer with Katie Holmes.


YOU HAD ME AT ANTIDEPRESSANTS!

Re-records key dialogue in "Jerry Maguire" to better reflect his current beliefs.

GERALD SCARFE/BEN GREENMAN

we have an environment where our principal leader cannot be well informed."

When a transport helicopter was shot down near Falluja in November, 2003, killing fifteen soldiers who were flying out on leave, the public waited for the President to make a statement about the single worst combat incident of the war. Bush said nothing for two days, until, when pressed by reporters while he was touring wildfire damage in California, he put his hand over his heart and said, "I am saddened any time that there's a loss of life. I'm saddened. Because I know a family hurts. And there's a deep pain in somebody's heart. But I do want to remind the loved ones that their sons and daughters—or the sons, in this case—died for a cause greater than themselves, and a noble cause, which is the security of the United States." The President seemed not to know that two of the soldiers in the helicopter were women. Ronald Reagan or Bill Clinton would never have missed such a detail. It wasn't indifference on Bush's part. It was a deliberate strategy of not being told too much, not getting bogged down in the day-to-day problems of the war, not waiting up past midnight for the casualty figures to come in, like Lyndon Johnson in the Situation Room. Not knowing kept the President from appearing distracted and discouraged. And, politically, it worked. Bush never seemed to be a President under siege.

To downplay the mounting death count in Iraq, the Administration enforced a ban on the filming or photographing of coffins arriving at Dover Air Force Base. The decision achieved a political success by keeping the death toll an unreality for those Americans who were not personally linked to a soldier. It played its part in making Iraq a remote war.

I asked Chris Frosheiser what he thought about the policy. He said, "We need to see the coffins, the flag-draped coffins. The hawks need to see it. They need to know there's a big price to pay. If they don't have skin in the game, they need to see it. And the doves need to see the dignity of the sacrifice. They don't always see that." He wanted to collect Kurt's posthumous medals, his folded funeral flag, his autopsy report, and a photo of the head wound, and take them on the road, making fifteen-minute presentations around the country. He would tell those who supported the war, "Suit up and show up." He would tell war opponents about the nobility of a soldier's duty. Or he wouldn't say anything at all. He simply wanted people to see.

The idea of diminishing the threat from the Middle East by spreading democracy, beginning with Iraq, had occurred to the Bush Administration before W.M.D.s turned out not to exist. Some officials had been promoting the notion for years, and the President had made the argument in a speech before the American Enterprise Institute a month before the invasion. But this was hardly the casus belli that the Administration had presented to the American people. When the Administration changed its rationale later on, without ever admitting to the shift, it had every appearance of a bait-and-switch.

Nevertheless, the idea deserved to be taken seriously by the political opposition at home and by America's allies. A few Democrats, like Biden and Ambassador Richard Holbrooke, took up the idea without diluting their criticism of the Administration's conduct in Iraq. This was a difficult mental balancing act, but it was also important, because what Iraqis and democracy needed most was a thoughtful opposition that could hold the Bush Administration to its own promises. Yet most of the war's critics, including leaders of the Democratic Party, refused to engage in debate. They turned the subject back to the missing weapons, or they scoffed at the Administration's sincerity, or they muttered about the dangers of utopianism, or they said nothing. As a result, the Administration never felt concerted pressure from the left to insure that Iraq emerged from the war with a viable democracy.

The lack of dialogue between the Republicans and the Democrats brought out the destructive instincts of each party, and Iraq got the worst of it. Abdication also left the Democratic Party in a bad position, both morally and politically. The Party's fortunes during the election year came to depend on Iraq's turning into a disaster. When a journalist pointed this out to the antiwar candidate Howard Dean, he said, "I'm hoping against it, but there's no indication that I should be expecting anything else." An informed argument that the American presence in Iraq could only make matters worse deserved a hearing, and some Democrats believed that heavy civilian casualties were reason enough for ending the war. But most critics offered a detached and complacent negativism. The election year proved to be the year in which Iraq did turn into a disaster, yet the Democrats failed to benefit, in part because they had nothing to offer instead. Chris Frosheiser ended up voting for Kerry by a hair, more out of party loyalty than anything else, but, between Bush's attempts at Lincolnian rhetoric and Kerry's unconvincing multi-point plans, a slender majority of American voters went for jury-rigged hope. And yet month after month the war grew less popular.

The cynicism on both sides was bound to reach the troops in Iraq. For many enlisted men and women, the mission became harder to understand and justify. Last summer, at the American base outside Mahmudiya, an insurgent stronghold in an area south of Baghdad which soldiers had nicknamed the Triangle of Death, I talked with several of Kurt Frosheiser's platoon buddies, including Matt Plumley, who had been next to him in the Humvee the night he was killed. We sat in a stifling trailer. They were privates, all but one of them in their early twenties, and they expressed a tender and fatalistic affection for the young man they called Fro.

"That incident woke me up," Marcus Murphy, a blond, soft-spoken Indianan, said. "These people are trying to kill us."

"It's amazing," Plumley said. "We're here trying to help."

Latrael Brigham, a black soldier from Texas, took Kurt's death as a failure of leadership. "I was pissed off, because we're riding around here with messed-up equipment. If you send men to war, you have to prepare them and equip them so they can fight. And have a vision of the aftermath of the war, have a plan about how you're going to finish it. And not just jump into it. And not put the whole burden on us Americans.

"We got ourselves into something," Brigham went on. "I wish I could have some real answers to why we're here, but I don't think I'll ever have them. Not any time soon."

Plumley, Kurt's best friend in the unit, had a shy manner, and his voice had a Southern twang. He was less ready than Brigham to write the whole thing off. "If everyone here hated us, there'd be I.E.D.s every five inches," he said.

Brigham said, "I don't see us changing hundreds of years of religion, and I don't see us bringing democracy to the region. We might be here ten years—depends on the casualties, the body bags coming home."

Murphy said, "What this country needs is a big civil war. There's so many religions—we need to leave and let them work it out themselves."

"I think we might have did it too fast," Plumley said.

"I love our democracy, but we can't impose it," Brigham said.

"I would hate if we did pull out," Plumley told him. "That would be very selfish for our country. We done messed it up."

Brigham said, "I don't think we're going to be here long enough. The insurgency's going to get worse. We can't stop it. There's always going to be more of them."

I asked the soldiers about the meaning of Kurt's death. Plumley said that there was a reason that he was alive instead of Kurt, but he didn't know what it was.

Brigham remembered Kurt arriving at basic training, out of shape, and beating him by two minutes in the two-mile run. But Kurt had worked hard to become a soldier.

"I never seen him in a bad mood," Plumley said.

"I think about Fro every day," Brigham said.

Plumley was smiling, remembering his friend. He had been the speaker at the Veterans Day memorial who couldn't hold back his tears, and for the first few days he had felt depressed. "Then I thought, How would Fro want me to be if he could see me? Every time I don't want to do something or think it's stupid, I say to myself, 'Would Fro think that? No.' So he gives me a lot of drive."

They were all quiet. Then they asked how Kurt's family was doing.

For Chris Frosheiser, Iraq posed an unanswered question about his son and his country. He didn't need to be proved right; he needed to find out what *was* right, in order to honor Kurt and the other soldiers who had died in Iraq. The war that had taken his son became an essential connection to his son, and he wanted to feel a connection, also, to the soldiers with whom Kurt had served and to the country where he had died. Nothing irritated Frosheiser more than when someone urged him to get on with his life. He searched obsessively, even frantically, through poems, song fragments, magazines (he read not just the *New Republic* but the left-wing *In These Times* and the right-wing *American Enterprise*), Army documents, e-mails, the First Armored Division Web site, American history books, tomes on the theory of a just war, Kurt's belongings, and his own memories. "What was my son involved in? Was it right?" he asked. "I'm looking for an account of it that can sit well in my mind and in my heart. I'm proud of Kurt's service. But the whole thing—were these guys misused? And for what?" He never made it easy for himself.

Frosheiser wrote to me not just as a father but as a citizen as well. Our e-mail exchange, however, didn't prepare me for the raw grief I encountered when I went to see him last year in Des Moines, over Memorial Day weekend. Within minutes of picking me up at the airport, Frosheiser was in tears; he was in tears when I left his apartment, two days later. His narrow blue eyes were always red-rimmed behind glasses, his fair skin raw with faint lines etched into his cheeks, his nose stuffed up. His sentences were often interrupted by a nervous laugh that broke into a sob before he regained control.

The Sunday before Memorial Day, we drove a few miles northeast of Des Moines to the new development of Altoona, where Erin, his daughter, lives. Neighbors were having a cookout in their driveway. (They had continued bringing over food and taking out Erin's trash months after Kurt's funeral.) Erin smiled kindly at her father when she saw that he was upset. "Not already, Dad." After dinner, we went to Erin's house and sat around the dining-room table, where, spread out, were photos of Kurt in his youth; his graduation portrait from Fort Knox, in which he was standing in front of a Bradley armored fighting vehicle; his combat patches; his "Killed in Action" banner, framed in red; his Purple Heart and Bronze Star; and his tri-cornered funeral flag, in a wooden frame.

Erin, a woman in her early thirties with a direct gaze, was having difficulty explaining things to her small children. Her five-year-old son, Colin, kept asking, "Why didn't he shoot them? Why are they there?" Her three-year-old, Madelyn, wouldn't remember Kurt when she grew up.

Erin had been trying hard to picture Iraq: the lives of Iraqi mothers, the dangers they lived with. "I have trouble imagining anyone's life but mine," she said. "Does that sound selfish? Sometimes I fear it's going to keep going until we blow up the world. And I wish we had a better plan." When she first saw the photos from Abu Ghraib, she said, "I thought, They blew up my brother—more power to them. Then more rational thoughts came up: We're trying to win them over, and this humiliation isn't helping our cause." She supported the war, but on a bad day in April, 2004, when twelve Americans were killed, she said to herself, "We've got to get out. I don't want other families to go through what we went through. But what do you accomplish? Because we lost Kurt for nothing, then."

For her father, the great challenge was simply to keep going. "This one-day-at-a-time thing works for me," he said. "I get in trouble when I start thinking, How am I going to get through these days and weeks and seasons?"

"Most days, I just pretend like it didn't happen," Erin said.

"Me, too. Sometimes I think it didn't happen—just for a minute. Then I know it did."

The alarm on Kurt's watch went off.

Frosheiser and I drove back to Des Moines. His apartment felt smaller than it was, because it lacked natural light and had become the cluttered repository for many of Kurt's things—his clothes and sports gear, his CDs stacked next to his father's old records and books, his memorial spurs, plaques, medals, flags. Frosheiser had been sleeping on the living-room couch, as if keeping a vigil, since the day Kurt left for basic training. I slept in Kurt's room. A dust-covered black U.S. Army shaving kit was on the toilet tank; in the closet, desert and jungle fatigues hung above desert combat boots, winter-weather boots, and a guitar. It was a long time before I fell asleep.

The grave was a patch of dark earth and green grass, surrounded by the graves of veterans of earlier wars; little Memorial Day flags were planted in each of them and fluttered in the breeze of a beautiful Midwestern spring morning. Frosheiser, in nylon blue sweats, saluted. "Hey, buddy," he said, kneeling to run his hand over the stone marker, which was engraved with a cross and the words

Kurt Russell Frosheiser
PV2 US Army
Iraq
Jul 10 1981 Nov 8 2003
Purple Heart

"It was hard to keep the snow off it because it kind of built up all winter," he said. "When the dirt was soft, you could press it and leave your handprints. That was a good thing." He was talking to the grave now. "It's less painful trying to forget it, but you have to keep remembering. Random thing, just a random thing. Kurt said, 'Live your life, old man,' and that could mean I'd be a bitter son of a gun, and I don't want that. That could very easily happen." He was adjusting the long-life candle under blue glass. "We know that people live on in our hearts, but do they live on in another way? We just don't know the answer to that." He slowly got to his feet, and we walked back to the car. "What does it all mean? It means nothing. How we respond is what it means."

A Memorial Day ceremony was taking place in a park next to the state capitol, and was attended by a small crowd, including a number of old men in veterans' caps. A woman from the committee that had organized the event recognized Frosheiser and escorted him over to a row of folding chairs, where he exchanged awkward greetings with his ex-wife. Jeanie was wearing a jacket bearing an image of the American flag and the words "These Colors Don't Run," but her face was crumpled with grief. A politician gave a short speech, and then the names of the Iowans who had been killed in Iraq—fourteen of them—were read. Frosheiser stood in line to place a rose beneath an M-16 that had been stuck, bayonet first, into the ground with a helmet perched on top, as had been done at the service in Baghdad.

After the ceremony, we drove across the state, toward the Illinois border, to the high-school graduation party of his ex-wife's niece. (Frosheiser wanted to keep family relationships as strong as possible, especially now.) We passed grain silos, seed factories, and fields of early corn and baled hay speckled with the shadows of fleecy white clouds racing across a blue sky. The pleasures of the road seemed to free Frosheiser's thoughts from the morning's burdens. "I wonder what Bush in private thinks about being against nation-building and now being waist-deep in it," he said. "What is that—paradox, or irony?" Since America was extending itself so deeply into other countries, Frosheiser said, the country needed to create a whole cadre of citizens who had been educated in the humanities and were capable of working overseas. "I was thinking of that song the other day, 'Ain't Gonna Study War No More.' Maybe we should study it. Otherwise, we're going to screw it up. Because it's going to be our kids and grandkids doing it." He had heard the new Bush foreign policy described as Wilsonian, an inspiring term. "There's this phrase, 'America the great and the just.' Reagan used to talk about 'the city on the hill.' The first time I heard Condi Rice talking about democracy in Iraq, I got chills up my back. But then you ask, 'How do you do it? Is it necessary?' " Frosheiser drove in silence for a while, and when he spoke again his voice was quieter. "That's where I kind of run up against a wall with regard to Kurt."

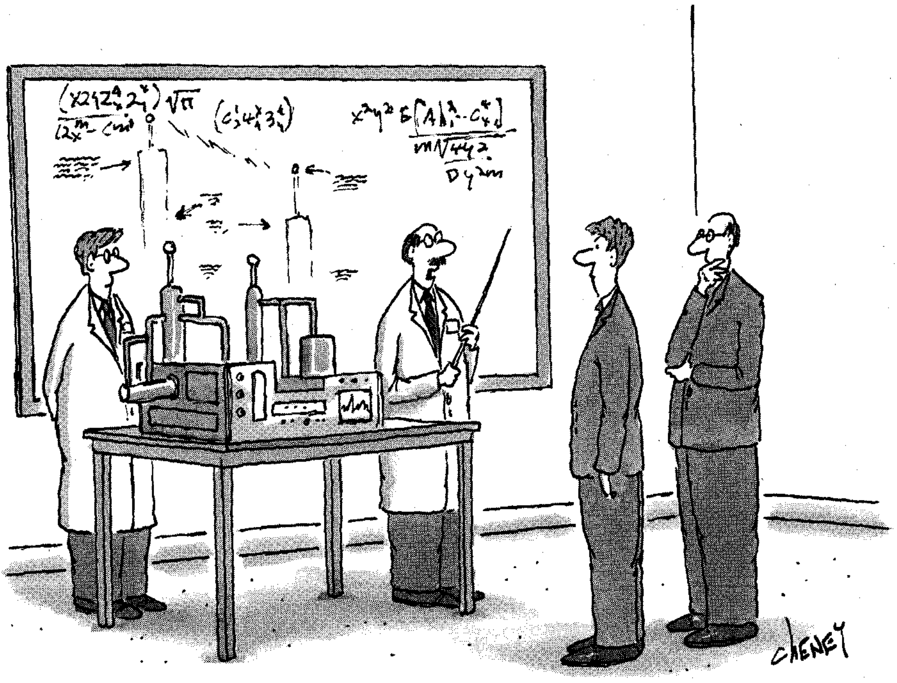
I asked him what he meant.

"Kurt's life—was he worth that? I'd say no. He was more important than that. So I pull back."

That night, back at his apartment in Des Moines, we were watching CNN—thirteen Memorial Day-weekend deaths in Iraq—when the phone rang. It was Matt Van Buren, the driver of Kurt's Humvee, calling from Germany, where he was still recovering from his shrapnel wounds. Frosheiser muted the sound and sat up in his rocking chair. The stress of the day had left him with a headache. "I'm not sure what I can ask you," he said to Van Buren. "Let me know if I go too far." On the other end, Van Buren was describing that night. Frosheiser said, "He got whacked on the head pretty good. He never had much of a chance—I understand that. He got hit in the wrong place."

I was watching the muted television: terror attacks in Saudi Arabia, gun battles outside Najaf, Special Forces operations in Afghanistan, Memorial Day ceremonies in America. Without sound, these felt like scenes from a war that had already receded into history.

"He wasn't able to talk after he was hit, was he?" Frosheiser asked. Listening, he broke into a sob. "But he was trying? Yeah, that sounds like him. I believe it. Yeah, I believe it." ♦



"It's designed to generate electricity by moving with fluctuations in the Dow."

PROFILES

THE MISFIT

Rei Kawakubo is a Japanese avant-gardist of few words, and she changed women's fashion.

BY JUDITH THURMAN

Does it really matter what one wears? I sometimes think my life might have been different if I had chosen the other wedding dress. I was getting married for the second time, and until the overcast morning of the ceremony I dithered between a bland écru frock appropriate to my age and station, which I wore that once and never again, and a spooky neo-Gothic masterpiece with a swagged bustle and unravelling seams in inky crêpe de laine, which I still possess: hope and experience.

The black dress—and other strange clothes in which I feel most like myself—was designed by Rei Kawakubo. In 1981, when she brought her first collection to Paris, Kawakubo was nearly forty and preëminent in Japan but largely unknown in the West. Mugler and Versace were the harbingers of a new moment: of a giddy, truculent materialism embodied, in different guises, by Margaret Thatcher, Madonna, Princess Di, Alexis Carrington, and Jane Fonda, and by legions of newly minted executives who wore block-and-tackle power suits to the office and spandex stirrup pants to the gym. These women were tough and glitzy and on the make without apologies, and so was fashion. Then, the following year, a collection that Kawakubo called "Destroy" hit the runway. It was modelled by a cadre of dishevelled vestals in livid war paint who stomped down the catwalk to the beating of a drum, wearing the bleak and ragged uniforms of a new order. Few if any spectators were left blasé, and some went home dumbstruck with rapture, while others lobbed back at the invader what they perceived as a blast of barbarity, tagging the look "Hiroshima's revenge." Kawakubo has never quite lived down (she has at times played up) that show of audacity, whose fallout is still being absorbed by fashion's young, yet which was much more Parisian than it seemed—a piece of shock theatre in the venerable tradition of "Ubu Roi" and "The Rite of Spring."

Kawakubo works under the label Comme des Garçons ("like some boys"), though she has never wanted to be like anyone. There are few women who have exerted more influence on the history of modern fashion, and the most obvious, Chanel, is in some respects her perfect foil: the racy courtesan who invented a uniform of irreproachable chic and the gnomic shaman whose anarchic chic is a reproach to uniformity. They both started from an egalitarian premise: that a woman should derive from her clothes the ease and confidence that a man does. But Chanel formulated a few simple and lucrative principles, from which she never wavered, that changed the way women wanted to dress, while Kawakubo, who

EICHIRO SAKATA

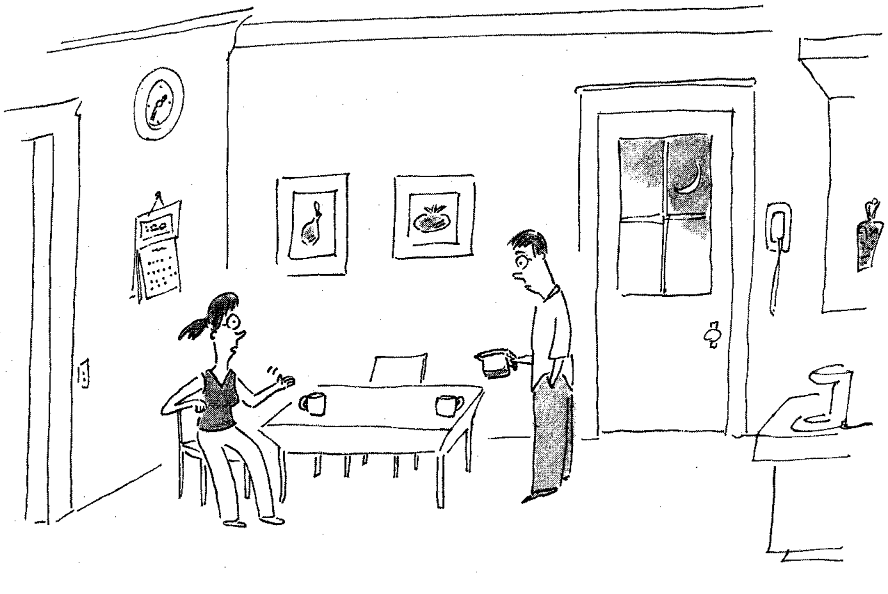
Kawakubo, above, in Tokyo this year. Opposite: a dress from the 2005 "Broken Bride" collection, photographed by Sarah Moon.

reinvents the wheel—or tries to—every season, changed the way one thinks about what dress is.

Early Comme, as devotees winsomely call it, gave comfort to the wearer and discomfort to the beholder, particularly if he was an Average Joe with a fondness for spandex stirrup pants. Kawakubo's silhouette had nothing to do with packaging a woman's body for seduction. Nearly any biped with sufficient aplomb, one thought, might have modelled the clothes, though especially, perhaps, a self-possessed kangaroo, whose narrow shoulders and well-planted, large feet are a Comme des Garçons signature. The palette was monochrome, with a little ash mixed into the soot, and one hears it said that Kawakubo "invented" black—it is one of the "objective achievements" cited by the Harvard school of design when it gave her an Excellence in Design Award, in 2000. What she objectively achieved was the revival of black's cachet as the color of refusal.

The French Old Guard, needless to say, reviled Comme des Garçons, but it immediately became popular among women of the downtown persuasion. In Kawakubo's voluminous clothes one felt provocative yet mysterious and protected. They weren't sized, and they weren't conceived on a svelte fitting model, then inflated to a sixteen. Their cut had the rigor, if not the logic, of modernist architecture, but loose flaps, queer trains, and other sometimes perplexing extrusions encouraged a client of the house to improvise her own style of wearing them. Shop assistants showed one the ropes—literally. A friend of mine who included Kawakubo in a course on critical theory suggested that these "multiple open endings" were a tactic for liberating female dress from an "omniscient male narrator."

Conventional fashion, and particularly its advertising, is a narrative genre—historical romance at one end of the spectrum and science fiction at the other, with chick lit in between—and Kawakubo doesn't have a story line, insisting, not always plausibly, that she works in a vacuum of influence and a tradition of her own creation. "I never intended to start a revolution," she told me last winter. "I only came to Paris with the intention of showing what I thought was strong and beautiful. It just so happened that my notion was different from everybody else's." Yet so many entitlements were challenged by the black regime of Comme des Garçons that it is hard not to see its commandant as a Red. The hegemony of the thin was one target, and the class system that governed fabrication was another. Kawakubo ennobled poor materials and humbled rich ones, which were sent off to be reëducated in the same work camp with elasticated synthetics and bonded polyester. She crumpled her silks like paper and baked them in the sun; boiled her woollens so that they looked nappy; faded and scrubbed her cottons; bled her dyes; and picked at her threadwork. One of the most mocked pieces from 1982 was a sublimely sorry-looking sweater cratered with holes that she called (one assumes with irony, though one can't be sure) "Comme des Garçons lace."



"Oh, what the hell. Sure, I'll have a little more marriage."

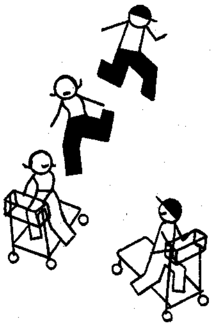
Kawakubo's most radical challenge to the canons of Western tailoring lay in her cutting. Couturiers before her had experimented with asymmetry in the one-shouldered gown or the diagonal lapel, though they were still working from a balanced pattern with a central axis—the spine. She warped her garments like the sheet of rubber that my high-school physics teacher used to illustrate the curvature of space, and she skewed their seams or closures so that the sides no longer matched. Just because a torso has two arms, she didn't see any reason that a jacket couldn't have none or three, of uneven length—amputated and reattached elsewhere on its body. Among the many mutants that she has engineered are a pair of trousers spliced to a skirt; the upper half of a morning coat with a tail of sleazy pink nylon edged in black lace; and her notorious "Dress Meets Body, Body Meets Dress" collection, of 1997—"Quasimodo" to its detractors—which proposed a series of fetching, body-hugging pieces in stretch gingham that were deformed in unsettling places (the back, belly, and shoulders) with bulbous tumors of down. The historian and curator Valerie Steele sees "a kind of violence—even a brutalism—to Rei's work that made most fashion of the time look innocuous and bourgeois, and from that moment an avant-garde split from the mainstream and hurtled off in its own direction." Steele was, she adds, "an instant convert."

Yet if Kawakubo consents to call her style "rebellious" and "aggressive" it is also intensely feminine in a bittersweet way. Her clothes suggest a kinship with a long line of fictional holy terrors: Pippi Longstocking, Cathy Earnshaw, Claudine—motherless tomboys who refused to master drawing-room manners and who, when forced into a dress, hiked up their petticoats and climbed a tree. Crushed frills are a leitmotif at Comme des Garçons, as are fraying ruffles; droopy ruffs; distressed pompoms; drab roses of wilted tulle, eyelet, crinoline, and broderie anglaise; and the round collars and polka dots that Kawakubo wore as a fauvish girl. In March, she showed a Fall-Winter collection whose theme was "The Broken Bride," which was almost universally admired. (I doubt that she was entirely happy with the reviews—when everyone understands her, she seems to get depressed.) The models wore whiteface and antique veils anchored by floral crowns. The ensembles, despite their sovereign refinement, had an eerily familiar air of desperate, last-minute indecision. They were trimmed with passementerie that might have been salvaged from a Victorian steamer trunk in which the finery of an old-fashioned maidenhood had been abandoned along with its illusions. The show, in its melancholy romance, captured the tension between vigor and fragility which dominates most modern women's lives, including Kawakubo's.

Tokyo was enjoying an unseasonable warm spell when I arrived at the beginning of February, and the famous allées of cherry trees in the Aoyama cemetery had been lured into bud. In the labyrinth of paths that fret the verdant tract of incalculably expensive real estate, which is sacred to Buddhists, Shintoists, Christians, and fashion photographers, I kept running into an old man and his two whippets, all three in Hermès coats. The dogs upset the great flocks of crows—*karasu*—that nest in the foliage or perch insolently on the tombs and whose bitter cawing fractures the peace. A *karasu* was said to be the messenger of the sun goddess, Amaterasu, Japan's mythical progenitress, from whom the imperial family claimed descent. Through the millennia, this brazen and potent female deity hasn't been much of a model to her countrywomen, particularly once they marry. Of the numerous characters for "wife," the most common, *okusan*, means "a figure of the inner realm."

Japanese girls still tend to sow their wild fashion oats before they settle down with a mate and disappear, if not into the shadows, into a Chanel suit. But Kawakubo started out making clothes, in the seventies, she said, for a woman "who is not swayed by what her husband thinks." (She was then deep into her black period, and her devotees were known in Tokyo as "the crows.") Two decades later, and shortly after her own wedding, to Adrian Joffe—a South African-born student of Asian culture ten years her junior, who is the president of Comme des Garçons International—she told an interviewer from *Elle* that "one's lifestyle should not be affected by the formality of marriage."

Kawakubo owns an apartment near the cemetery, in one of the modern towers on its perimeter, not far from her headquarters and the three stores she has in the smart Aoyama shopping district. The apartment's precise location is a secret (very few friends and none of the longtime employees whom I met had ever crossed its threshold), and she lives alone there with her twenty-year-old cat, the last of five. Joffe, who is based in Paris, sees her, he says, at least once a month, and between collections they take a week to travel—generally choosing somewhere off the fashion radar screen, like Yemen or Romania. He is a slight, intense man who speaks five languages, including fluent Japanese, and he acts as his wife's interpreter. Small talk—indeed any talk—is not Kawakubo's forte. She doesn't take invisibility to theological extremes, like Martin Margiela, fashion's Pynchon, who is, with some of his fellow-alumni of the Antwerp School (Ann Demeulemeester, Walter van Beirendonck, Olivier Theyskens, and Raf Simons), one of her acolytes, though she rarely poses for a photograph or gives an interview anymore, and, several years ago, she stopped taking a bow after her shows. From the beginning of her career, she has insisted that the only way to know her is "through my clothes." Her employees, including Joffe, treat her with a gingerly deference that seems to be a mixture of awe for her talent and forbearance with her moods.



Kawakubo is now sixty-two. She is the sole owner of a company with a dozen boutiques and some two hundred franchises on four continents, which manufactures twelve lines of clothing, and grosses about a hundred and fifty million dollars annually. But, despite her wealth, her only apparent major indulgence is a vintage car, a monster Mitsubishi from the nineteen-seventies, which attracts the kind of stares in Tokyo that her clothes attract in Houston. The recreations common to designers of her prestige, such as collecting villas or art and socializing with celebrities, don't appeal to her, and the atmosphere of her office "is more monastic than commercial," as the journalist Deyan Sudjic puts it in a monograph on her career that was published in 1990. But she recently learned to swim, and on her way to work she sometimes takes a detour through the Aoyama cemetery to feed the stray cats.

Before I met Kawakubo in Paris, Joffe and I spent a day in Berlin at a Comme des Garçons "guerrilla store," which then occupied the former bookshop of the Brecht Museum, on a seedy block in the eastern sector of the city. It is part of an experiment in alternative retailing (inconspicuous consumption) which the company launched in 2004. There are now seven such outposts, most in Northern Europe, in cities like Helsinki and Ljubljana. Each of the stores is an ephemeral installation that opens without fanfare and closes after a year. Their decorating budgets are less than the price of some handbags at Gucci and Prada, and original fixtures, including raw cinder block and peeling wallpaper, are left as they are found. Brecht might have approved the poetic clothes and the proletarian mise en scène, if not the insurrectionary conceit. "But the word 'guerrilla' as Rei understands it isn't political," Joffe says. "It refers to a small group of like-minded spirits at odds with the majority. She's fascinated by the Amish, for example, and the Orthodox Jews."

Part of Joffe's role is to help make his wife intelligible whether or not she is present, and an unease sometimes creeps into his tone: the anxiety of a parent who resents the injustice yet accepts the inevitability of having to subject an antisocial prodigy to a school interview. "Are you scared of her?" I asked him bluntly over a Wiener schnitzel at the Café Einstein. "No," he said, "but she can be dictatorial, and I'm sometimes scared of the way she might treat people." Kawakubo treated me with a courtly if reticent politesse, and our conversations weren't unlike a tea ceremony: exquisitely strained. She is a tiny woman with taut cheekbones, a graying pageboy, and an aura of severity. When we were introduced in her showroom, last January, she was wearing a pair of trousers most easily described as a hybrid of a dhoti and a jodhpur, with a trim cardigan and a corsage of safety pins. Though she cultivates a reputation for being both timid and intimidating, some of her friends—among them Carla Sozzani, the Milanese retailer and gallerist, and Azzedine Alaïa, the couturier—assured me that, in private, Kawakubo can be a charming pal, congenial and even "hysterically funny." (I duly asked her what she laughs at, and she answered deadpan, "People falling down.") She patiently entertained the speculations with which I tried to prime her, and allowed that some of them "might be true." "But I'm very grateful that you haven't asked me about my 'creative process,'" she said, as I was leaving one afternoon. "I couldn't explain it to you. And, even if I could, why would I want to? Are there people who really wish to explain themselves?"

Kawakubo was born in Tokyo in 1942. She was the oldest of her parents' three children and their only daughter. (One of her brothers works as a director in the commercial department of Comme des Garçons, and the staff refers to him as Mister, to differentiate the two siblings in conversation, because there can be only one Kawakubo-san.) Their father was an administrator at Keio University, a prestigious institution founded by the great Meiji educator and reformer Fukuzawa Yukichi, a champion of Western culture and, according to Kawakubo, of women's rights. She admires Yukichi as an "enlightened man," but she has never belonged to a movement, followed a religion, subscribed to an ideology, or worshipped a hero, "because for me belief means that you have to depend on somebody."

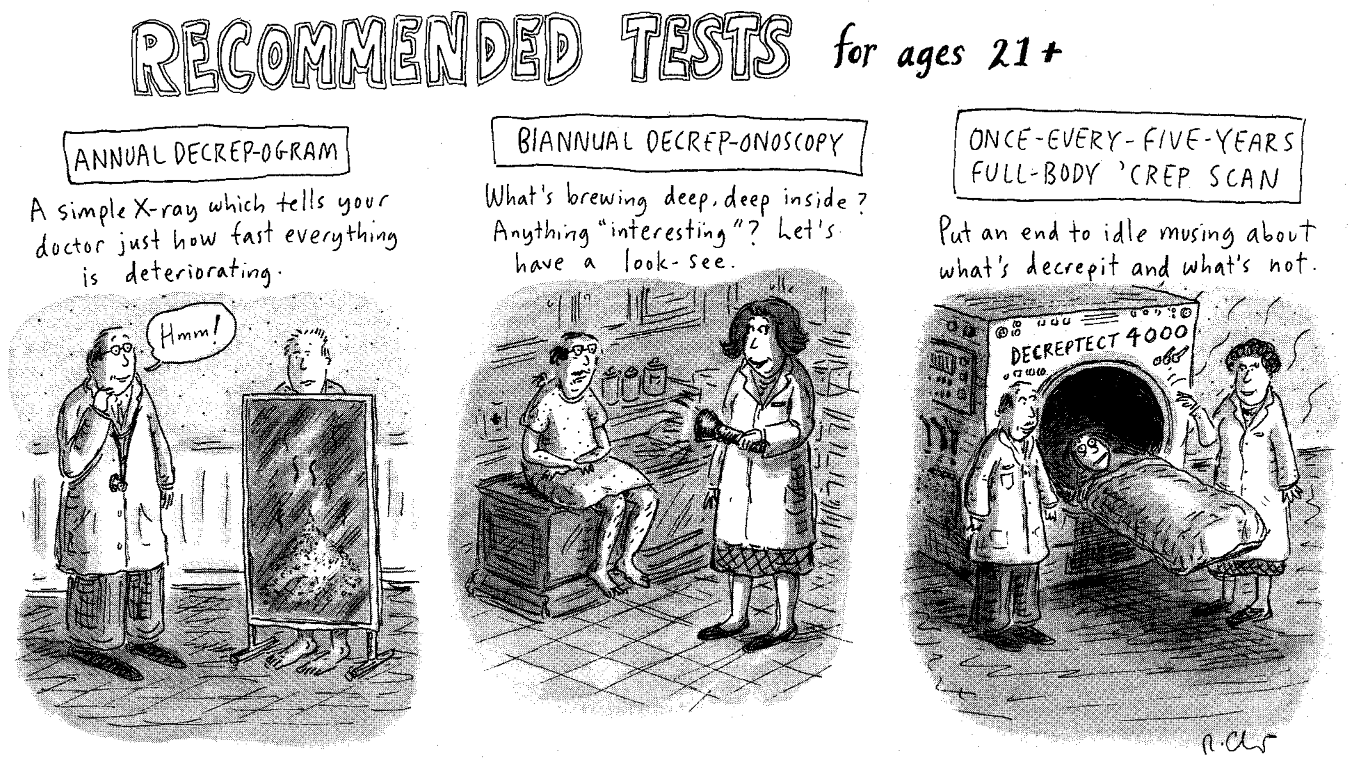
Sudjic relates a few anodyne details about Kawakubo's girlhood (that she bunched her socks down as a revolt against the conformity of her school uniform, for example). Her home was "comfortable," he writes, and her family "a close one," and she told me that her mother made all the clothes. The trauma of war and the privations that Japan suffered in its aftermath didn't, she thought, have an appreciable effect on her. Yet however ordinary she felt her upbringing to be ("You think I'm not normal because you're looking at the clothes," she said to me somewhat plaintively when we met in Tokyo. "But I am. Can't rational people create mad work?"), her biography neglects to mention that she grew up with divorced parents. Her mother was trained as an English teacher—Kawakubo understands and speaks the language better than she lets on—and when the children were of a certain age she wanted to work. Her husband disapproved, and for almost all Japanese wives of that class and era his word would have been law. Kawakubo's mother left him, however, and got a job in a high school. "She was unlike other mothers," Kawakubo says. "I always felt like an outsider." But she also had a model of defiance and autonomy.

In 1960, Kawakubo enrolled in her father's university and took a degree in "the history of aesthetics," a major that included the study of Asian and Western art. In 1964, the year she graduated, Japan hosted the Olympics. "The postwar period of poverty, humiliation, and, until 1952, Allied occupation was finally over, and the boom years of the economic miracle had begun," Ian Buruma writes in "Inventing Japan." Kawakubo's generation discovered—and in varying degrees embraced—the counterculture of the sixties. At twenty-two, with a nod toward her mother's act of lèse-majesté, she left home "without telling my parents where I was going or what I was doing," and moved into a shared apartment in Harajuku, which was Tokyo's East Village and is still a mildly louche neighborhood of clubs and boutiques where pierced teens (most of them home by dinnertime) hang out wearing outré street fashions and trying to look ghetto. Kawakubo was never a druggie or a rebel, she says, "though in my head I liked the bohemian life style." On the other hand, she went to college with "a lot of rich people—that's who goes to élite institutions, and they are generally conservative." She found the solidity of their lives appealing, and she considers herself to have a dual character: the right half "likes tradition and history," the left "wants to break the rules." Nearly every statement Kawakubo makes about herself is hedged or negated by a contradiction, and she resists being defined even by her own words. The desire to be unique and the sense of isolation that the feeling generates are a predicament common to artistic people. What makes Kawakubo's clothes so attractive to them is precisely her genius for wrapping up the paradoxes of being a misfit and a cipher in something to wear that is magically misfitting.

Tokyo in the sixties was not yet the world's capital of luxury consumerism. Many women still made their own clothes or patronized a local tailor, and the best-known Japanese couturier, Hanae Mori, worked in a decorous Parisian mode. Kawakubo wasn't thinking of a fashion career: her only vocation was for a life of self-sufficiency. She found a job "at the bottom of the ladder" in the advertising department of Asahi Kasei, a textile manufacturer. Her boss was sympathetic to her ambitions. He accepted her unusual refusal to wear the standard uniform of an office girl, and he allowed her some modest creative freedom in helping to scout props and costumes for photo shoots. After three years, one of her older colleagues, Atsuko Kozasu, who later became an influential fashion journalist and an early booster of Comme des Garçons, encouraged Kawakubo to go freelance as a stylist. When she couldn't find clothes suitable for her assignments, she began to design them, and she often says that she's grateful to have skipped fashion school or an apprenticeship because, in the end, even if she can't sew or cut a pattern, she had no preconceptions to unlearn, and no master to outgrow.

By 1969, Kawakubo's work as a stylist had become a sideline that helped finance the production of the youthful sportswear that she sold through trend-setting shops like Belle Boudoir, in the Ginza, whose communal fitting room—"just like a London boutique"—impressed her. She rented office space in a graphic-arts studio and hired a few assistants. Tsubomi Tanaka, who is Comme des Garçons' chief of production, has been with her almost from the beginning. Tanaka was then a country girl who had left home to work in a Harajuku shop and, she says, "do my own thing," and she first noticed Kawakubo on the street. "Even in those days, she had an aura," Tanaka says, "and I asked a friend if she knew her name, because I wanted to meet her."

Sudjic writes, "Kawakubo's experiences as a stylist had taught her the importance of creating a coherent identity"—a philosophy of design that is followed as strictly in the company's Christmas cards as it is in the flagship stores. But the styling of


RECOMMENDED TESTS for ages 21+
ANNUAL DECREP-O-GRAM
A simple X-ray which tells your doctor just how fast everything is deteriorating.
Hmm!
BIANNUAL DECREP-ONOSCOPY
What's brewing deep, deep inside? Anything "interesting"? Let's have a look-see.
ONCE-EVERY-FIVE-YEARS FULL-BODY 'CREP SCAN
Put an end to idle musing about what's decrepit and what's not.
DECREPTECT 4000

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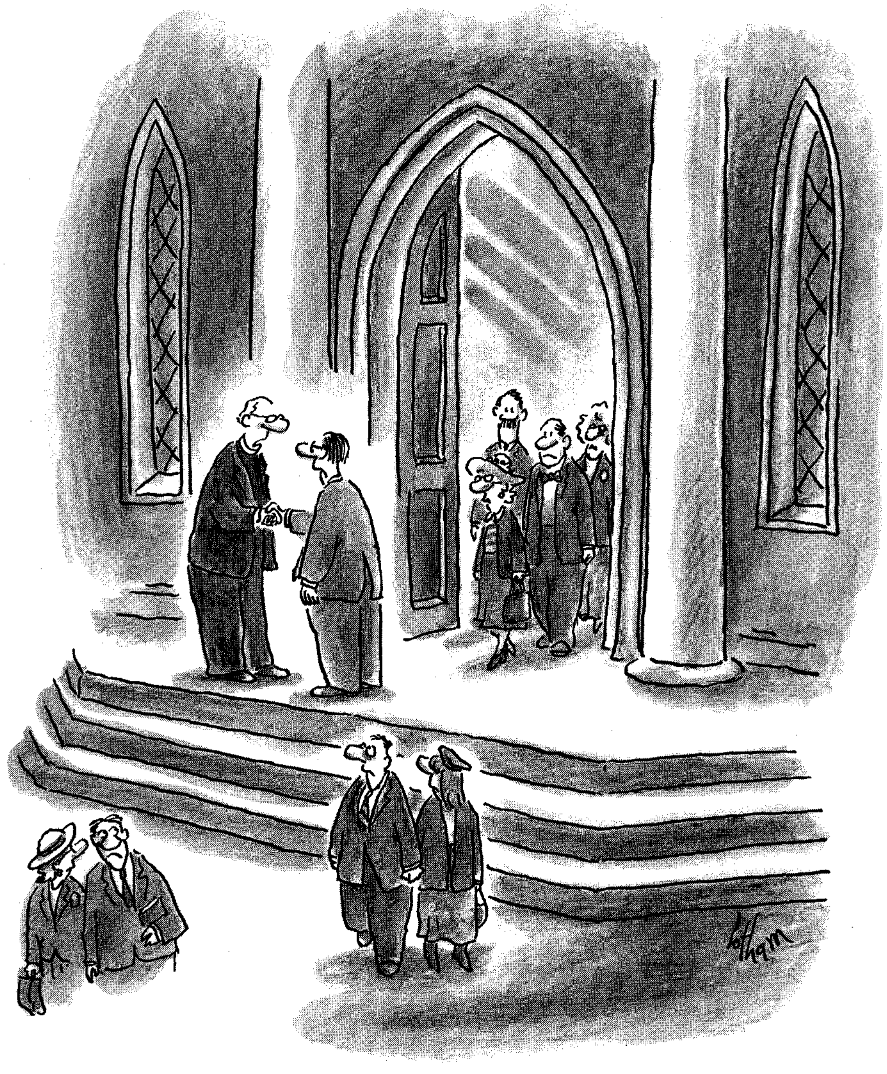
that signature is a collaborative effort that demands an almost cultish attunement among the participants, and it is one of the paradoxes of Comme des Garçons that a designer obsessed with singularity and an entrepreneur allergic to beholdenness have spun such an elaborate web of dependence. In the workplace, Kawakubo's laconic detachment—the refusal to explain herself—forces her employees, particularly the pattern cutters, to look inward, rather than to her, for a revelation of the all-important "something new." Tanaka says, "The work is very hard, and I have to delve deep into my own understanding because her words are so few. But there's always some give to the tautness. And I'm still moved by the collections. That's why I've been here for so long."

Comme des Garçons' chief patterner, Yoneko Kikuchi, a thirty-year veteran of the firm, describes the arduous, if not mildly perverse, esoteric groping in the dark through which a collection comes into focus. It begins with a vision, or perhaps just an intuition, about a key garment that Kawakubo hints at with a sort of koan. She gives the patterners a set of clues that might take the form of a scribble, a crumpled piece of paper, or an enigmatic phrase such as "inside-out pillowcase," which they translate, as best they can, into a muslin—the three-dimensional blueprint of a garment. Their first drafts are inevitably too concrete. "She always asks us to break down the literalness," Kikuchi says. The quest proceeds behind closed doors, like a papal election, and successive meditations on the koan produce more or less adequate results. The staff calls the process by a deceptively playful English word, "catchball," though as the deadline for a collection approaches, and Kawakubo is still dissatisfied, the "anguish and anger" mount in the cutting room. "We all want to please her," Kikuchi explains, "and it's sometimes hard for patterners who have come from other companies, because they just want you to tell them how wide the collar is supposed to be. But you can't teach people to let go, and some end up leaving." ("They make it sound more interesting than it is," Kawakubo says, dryly. "The ideas aren't as abstract as they used to be.")

The business flourished, and was incorporated in 1973. By 1980, Comme des Garçons had a hundred and fifty franchised shops across Japan, eighty employees, and annual revenues of thirty million dollars. Fans of the house had none of the designer's scruples about hero worship: they went on camping weekends together organized by the franchisees, and there was talk of a Comme des Garçons restaurant where the faithful could meet. The clothes they loved were inspired by the loose and rustic garb of Japanese fishermen and peasants. When I asked Kawakubo what those early designs looked like (she hasn't kept many pictures in her archives), she answered after a long, perhaps embarrassed, pause, "Denim apron skirt. Very popular. I made different versions of it." Their chicest detail may have been the Comme des Garçons label, typeset in a font created by Kawakubo, with a star for the cedilla, which hasn't changed. It isn't obvious how she made her evolutionary leap, but it occurred in the early eighties, when she abandoned representational fashion and introduced the notion of clothing as wearable abstraction.

Most people naturally assume that Comme des Garçons is not just a logo but a slogan, and when Kawakubo was still giving interviews she compared her work with menswear, in its ideals of comfort and discretion, although she has denied that there was any message to the three words: she had just liked their French lilt. They mean what they mean, however, and there are few women who personify the ideals of seventies feminism with greater fidelity. The phrase comes, with a slight tweak, from the refrain of a pop song, by Françoise Hardy, in which a wistful teen-age girl enviously watches happy couples walking “hand in hand” and wonders if the day will come when—“*comme les garçons et les filles de mon age*”—she will find someone to love her. One may have such yearnings at any age, and Kawakubo was into her thirties when she met the love of her youth, Yohji Yamamoto. There was something pharaonic about their glamour as a couple, that of two regal and feline siblings with a priestly aura, and they shared the regency of a new generation in Japanese design. Both are alumni of Keio University (Yamamoto was two years behind her) and children of enterprising single mothers—his a widow who owned a dress shop. Yet, as the eloquent idiosyncrasy of their work suggests, a match between equals is rarely a balanced pattern whose cuts and edges align.

Like Kawakubo, Yamamoto is an anomaly in the fashion world on a number of counts, his proclivities among them. He married young and fathered two children. A different union produced a third child six years ago. For some years in between, he and Kawakubo were “travelling companions,” as Kiyokazu Washida coyly puts it in an essay he contributed to Yamamoto’s book, “Talking to Myself,” a sumptuous pictorial chronicle of the designer’s career which was published in 2002. Malcolm McLaren remembers Kawakubo and Yamamoto as a petite, stylish couple of “excellent customers” (he didn’t yet know they were designers) who, in the seventies, turned up at Sex, the mother of all guerrilla shops, an outpost of seditionary music and fashion that he and his partner, Vivienne Westwood, had opened at World’s End, in London. (Decades later, Westwood told Kawakubo that she considered her a “punk at heart.”) They made their Paris débuts the same year, and were invariably linked, or lumped, together as part of an emerging Tokyo school that was challenging the conventions of Western couture, and of which Issey Miyake was the doyen. Kawakubo bridled at the group portraits. “I’m not very happy to be classified as another Japanese designer,” she told *Women’s Wear Daily* in 1983. “There is no one characteristic that all Japanese designers have.”



“He knows what you did in Las Vegas.”

Yamamoto was unavailable for an interview, but his friend and associate Irène Silvagni, a former fashion journalist, speaks of “the enormous competition between Rei and Yohji that she, I think, needed and thrived on.” As far as Silvagni knows, they never collaborated, but “they both wanted to break the rules, and Yohji likes to say that ‘perfection is the devil,’ which I think is true for Rei. Japanese temples were always left unfinished for that reason.” It is her perception that “they admire each other deeply, but there’s a lot of baggage between them.” She referred me to the baggage depot at the end of “Talking to Myself,” in which Yamamoto sets down some fragmentary aperçus on a variety of existential subjects, including alcohol, gambling, insomnia, and women. “I’m always assuming that if she’s my girlfriend she won’t create a scandal,” he writes of a nameless consort. “I’m sure of this even if it’s unfounded.”

The relationship ended in the early nineties. When a childless single woman nearing fifty suddenly starts to do her best work, she often has a broken heart. Joffe had joined Comme des Garçons in 1987, and on July 4, 1992, he and Kawakubo were married at the city hall in Paris. The bride wore a black skirt and a plain white shirt. That winter, she showed a hauntingly lovely collection that is still a favorite. It was composed of ethereal chiffon layers yoked to cone-shaped knitted turtlenecks that masked the face from the nose down, worn over flowing shifts with sorcerer’s sleeves. Their color was nightshade, and their inspiration the myth of Lilith—a female demon of Jewish folklore, whom God created of “filth and sediment” when Adam, like the girl in the Hardy song, complained that he was the only creature on the planet without a mate. In Robert Graves’s version, Adam and his first wife “never found peace together,” because she rebelled at “the recumbent posture he demanded.” When he “tried to compel her obedience by force, Lilith, in a rage . . . rose into the air and left him.” So much for girlfriends who don’t create scandals.

Lilith’s heretical divorce was a juncture for Kawakubo, too. She was tiring of black (but she tires of anything once it catches on, and being avant-garde, she said recently, has become a cliché). She began to play with the opulent fabrics she had once disdained: damask, brocade, and velvet; with brilliant, sometimes lurid colors; and even with the staples of drag and bimbohood—sheer lingerie (worn with winkle pickers) and campy bustiers (layered over bulky topcoats). For commercial reasons, she says, she started sizing the clothes and narrowing the gap between dress and body. She edited the guest lists for her shows to a sympathetic coterie of editors and buyers, in part, as Amy Spindler wrote in the *Times,* because “multiplying the attendance figures . . . only serves to increase the number of people who don’t get it.” But Spindler also noted that Kawakubo “typically throws a bone to those who still believe clothes are for wearing outside fashion focus groups without being gawked at.” Her easier-to-wear subsidiary lines, particularly Robe de Chambre (now called Comme des Garçons Comme des Garçons)—a microcosm of her own wardrobe—streamline the runway concepts to reach a broader public. “I’m not an artist, I’m a businesswoman,” Kawakubo says. “Well, maybe an artist/businesswoman.”

Despite the relative accessibility of “The Broken Bride,” Kawakubo denies vehemently that she has mellowed (“I am still as aggressive as I’ve always been”), and every few years she reasserts her militance by exploding another bomb on the Paris stage. In 1995, the presentation of her menswear collection, which included a series of baggy striped pajamas reminiscent to some critics of the prison uniforms at Auschwitz, happened to coincide with the fiftieth anniversary of the camp’s liberation. Kawakubo apologized for any offense she might, unintentionally, have given, and Jewish organizations who reviewed the videos were satisfied that no sacrilege had been committed. But she was perfectly conscious of the storm she conjured two seasons later with “Dress Meets Body.” (Her own staff loved the sexy and salable silhouette, but there were worries about its bulges, and Kawakubo ultimately decided to make the troubling wads removable, though she wore them herself, and adapted them as costumes for a dance by Merce Cunningham. On perfect bodies in motion, they transcend their morbidity.) The collection was inspired, Joffe says, “by Rei’s anger at seeing a Gap window filled with banal black clothes.” Kawakubo concedes, with an ambiguous grimace that might just be a grin, “I may have been especially angry at the time, but I’m more or less always angry anyway.”

Early one morning in Paris, the cobblestones of the Place Vendôme were varnished by a drizzle, and a row of limousines idled in front of the Ritz, waiting for clients in town for the menswear shows. The couture had just finished, and, in the terribly chic restaurants where fashion people eat their tiny portions of mediocre food, they were complaining that the couture *was* finished. Only eight designers had bothered to mount a show, and there was a sense that a once festive, feudal tournament of virtuosity had become a Renaissance fair with demonstrations of spinning and horseshoeing in period costume. But no one had informed Armani, a couture débutant. In *Le Figaro,* he discoursed with a quaint gravity on *les tendances de la mode* and affirmed his belief in “simplified lines that are easy to understand,” because “true success means pleasing everyone”—a succinct résumé of everything in fashion that Kawakubo doesn’t stand for, in both senses.

Across the square, in a narrow courtyard adjacent to the showroom of Comme des Garçons, the company’s Paris staff, joined by a contingent from the Aoyama headquarters, who were groggy with jet lag, assembled for the morning salutation—a monastic ritual of solidarity performed daily in Tokyo. They formed a circle, shivering a little, and waited in silence for Kawakubo. Her protégé Junya Watanabe, who has a wrestler’s physique and a cherub’s face, squeezed in near Mister, who looked, in his business suit, a little like the hired mourner at a rocker’s funeral. Joffe was surprised at his wife’s delay (“She’s a stickler for punctuality”), but she arrived at her habitual gait—the anxious scuttle of a sparrow with a broken wing—and took her place.

Kawakubo was sporting her favorite accessory: a dour expression. A collection, she says, is never not “an exercise in suffering,” and she “starts from zero every time,” destitute of confidence. It is ironic to her, she said at our last meeting in Tokyo, that a career she undertook “with one objective: to be free as a woman,” has become a Spartan life of self-imposed servitude. But sympathy and compliments both annoy her, perhaps because they rub salt into the incurable and necessary wound of her discontent. The only consolation she can imagine “is an hour to spend with animals.”

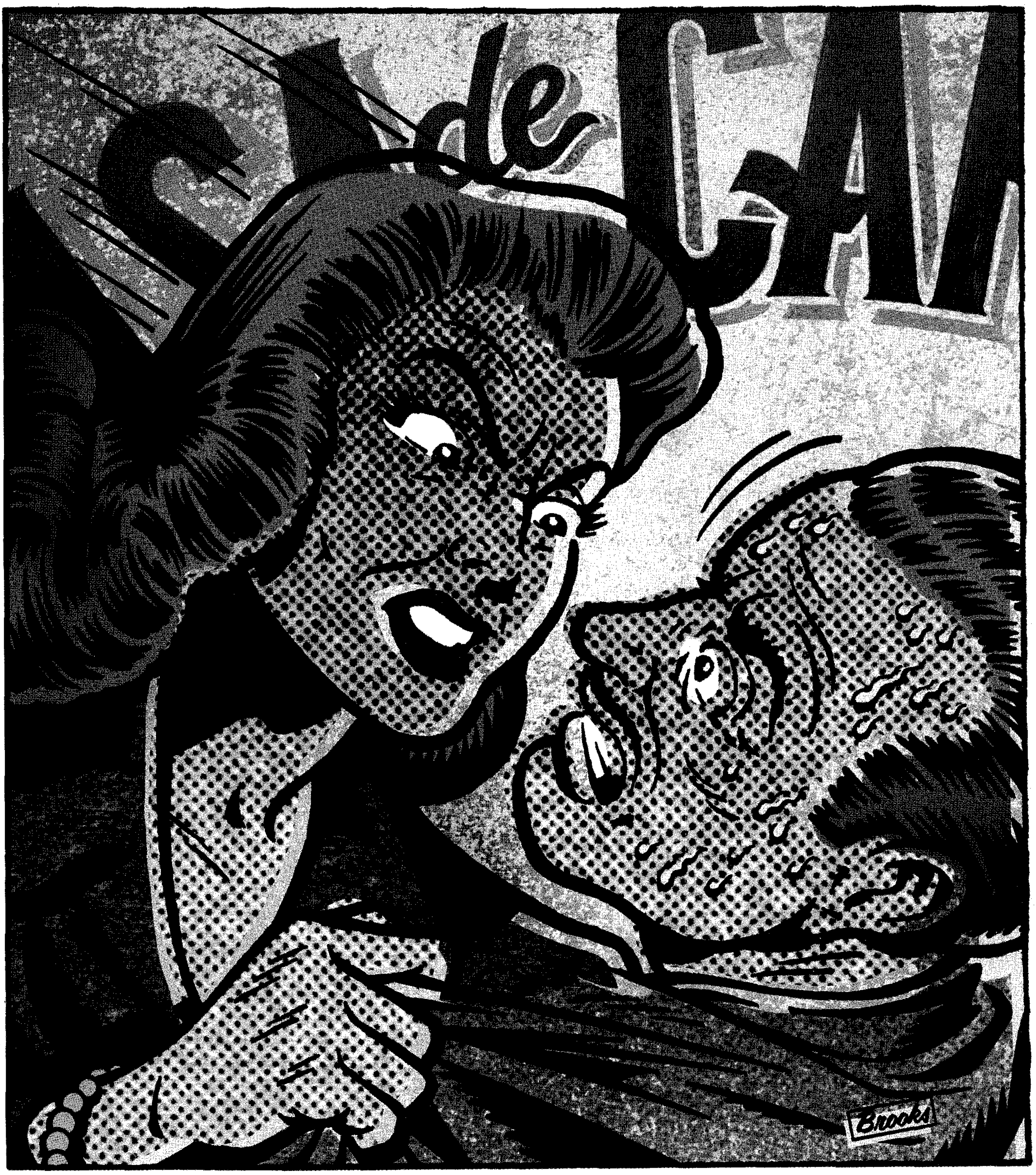
When she wants to, however, Kawakubo smiles through her clothes. That morning, she had chosen a black sweater strategically appliquéd with two white circles and a triangle that one could read either as a face or two breasts and a pubis, and which was meant as an homage to Rudi Gernreich’s bikini and its muse, Peggy Moffitt. On her way to the rehearsal of her menswear defile, Kawakubo threw on one of her cheeky biker jackets from Spring, 2005: a crudely sutured leather blouson bred to an unbroken-in catcher’s mitt, then taught some charm by a vintage couture bolero with a standaway collar. “Balenciaga on steroids,” as an assistant put it.

Cristobal Balenciaga, who died in 1972, was a chivalric holdout from a courtlier age whose passing he lamented. If anyone “invented” black, he did. The ecclesiastic lines of his sculptural couture liberated women from the tyranny of the wasp-waisted New Look, and later from the ruthlessness of the miniskirt. His clients were the kind of *grandes bourgeoises* at whom Parisian spectacles of shock theatre have always been aimed, but Balenciaga himself might have recognized Kawakubo as a kindred spirit. They are both idealists whose work devoutly affirms that it matters what one wears—something pure in its distinction—and in that sense they have a common ancestor. He was an aging and spindly Spanish samurai who, like Kawakubo in her faintly obscene trompe-l’oeil bikini, was never afraid to cut an absurd yet heroic figure in a cynical world: the ridiculous made sublime. ♦

FICTION

ASHES

BY CRISTINA HENRÍQUEZ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CAM
Brooks

I'm at work on Saturday when I get the call. Carina, from the front counter, pages me over the intercom and when I finally get to the phone it's my older brother, Jano, telling me I might want to sit down because he has upsetting news.

"Tell me," I say.

"Do you have a chair?"

"Just tell me."

What I have is a hollow feeling in my stomach the size of a coconut.

"Mamá's gone," he says.

"What?" My heart seizes.

"Señora López found her today."

"Found her? Where was Papi?"

"Are you sitting down?" he asks again.

"Stop asking me that. Why can't you just answer my questions?"

"It's a little bit complicated, O.K.?"

"How?"

But he won't answer that, either. He just suggests we meet when I get off work because we have a lot of things to take care of.

I'm not supposed to use the phone during work hours, but I call Armando as soon as I hang up. I hold the plastic beige contraption trembling next to my ear as I talk. He tells me I should take off early, that my boss will understand because this is an extenuating circumstance. Armando's never had to work anywhere like this, though, and he doesn't get the idea that I'm just a body doing a job, not *somebody* doing it. Still, I tell him I'll try. He leaves me with "We can go out for dinner if you want. You don't have to cook."

I end up staying at Casa de la Carne for my whole shift. Work helps keep my mind off everything. If I'd left early, I would have been a blubbering thing sitting on the curb in the parking lot—the way I can be only in private, or sometimes, when he's being nice, with Armando. Never in front of my family. I know they think I'm more heartless than them for that, but I know the truth. I know my depths.

The story is that she had a heart attack. She was cooking—like she was always cooking—and she simply fell over on the kitchen floor. Papi was sitting in a wooden chair at the kitchen table, probably smoking a cigarette while she worked, waiting to be served. She fell right at his feet. We think he tried to help her, tried to blow air into her mouth, pumping and puffing. Jano says Papi picked up the phone but couldn't remember the number for emergency, and, after trying a jumble of numbers over and over again, he just gave up.

"Why didn't he call one of us?" I say when I see Jano after work.

Jano shrugs. "I don't think he really knew what was happening."

We both know Papi is sick, mentally gone, but we never talk about him in those terms. We like to pretend he's just old.

When Sra. López got there this morning, she found Papi sitting in the wooden chair with the phone still in his hand, buzzing because it was off the hook. She saw Mamá at his feet.

"The oven was on, too," Jano says. "There could have been a fire on top of everything else." He shakes his head.

Sra. López pried the phone from Papi's hands and called Jano. That was earlier today.

"Papi's going to stay with me now," Jano says. "I don't think he can be alone."

"He can stay with me," I say.

Jano shakes his head. "Uh-uh."

"Why not?"

"He'll like it at our house better."

"My place is fine."

"What?" Jano asks. "You have a newfound interest in him?"

"Do *you*?"

We're at an ice-cream shop near my work. The cold air has turned Jano's lips slightly purple. Besides an employee in a pink apron, we're the only people here. The bright lights bounce off the white counters and smack me in the face. I'm quiet for a minute. Then I start on a reel of questions. How does he know it was a heart attack? What are we going to do now? What's happening to the house? Is his wife, Zenia, O.K. with Papi being there? What else did Papi say? Why did Sra. López call him instead of me?

He answers every one. He's unusually patient with me. He's waiting to see if I'll break, I know, if this will be the thing that puts me over the edge, brave-faced little Mireya.

The last time I saw her, my mother was sitting with me on her patio. She was in the metal rocking chair she'd had since before I was born, olive-green seat cushions and floral ironwork along the arms. She had her legs stretched out in front of her, knee-high nylons rolled down around her crossed ankles like life preservers, terry house slippers on her feet. She looked relaxed as she lectured me on her favorite subject—politics. She was telling me how fortunate it was that she had named me Mireya, because the President of Panama was Mireya Moscoso. She must have said about ten times, "That could have been you," as if the only prerequisite for becoming the President was having the right name.

She hated that politics held no interest for me. The one thing my mother liked about Armando was his appetite for the political. Just for that, of all the people in my family, she was his only fan.

That day, there was an election parade in the neighborhood. Martín Torrijos was riding all over our section of town, shouting from the windows of his van and waving a Panamanian flag in a bid to become the next President. It was the reason we were outside on the patio. My mother was waiting for him. We'd been talking for almost an hour when his big white van, followed by pickup trucks with speakers on the flatbeds blasting music, rumbled up our street. My mother stood and smoothed out the front of her robe. She was old enough that her spine had begun to bow.

Torrijos stopped his van in front of our patio. He asked my mother how she and her sister, meaning me, were doing.

My mother shouted, "What will you do about the hospitals?"

Torrijos smiled and waved.

"And what about the canal?" she yelled into the sunlight.

Torrijos tossed a T-shirt out the window to her. "For you!" he shouted.

My mother let it land at her feet. "*Pendejo!*" she shouted, and the van continued up the street.

It wasn't everyone who would call a politician an idiot to his face. I smiled until I thought my cheeks would burst. I'd always felt there was something special between my mother and me. Like she was somehow more mine than Jano's. But maybe all children feel that—a sovereignty of ownership over the parent they love best.

When I get home that night, Armando sprints out to see me.

"*Pobrecita*," he says. He's making a face like I'm a puppy with a broken leg. "I have a poem for you."

"Another one?"

LOU BROOKS

"When was the last one?" he asks, leaning over the kitchen table, reaching for a book. He finds the page he wants and says, "It's by César Vallejo. He's one of the great writers. He wrote for the people."

I sit down as he reads it to me. I don't understand poetry the way he does. Things either sound good to me or they don't. That's it. The poem he reads tonight is short. It's about the poet's brother, who died. My favorite line is "And now a shadow falls on the soul." I feel the tears burn behind my eyes.

"It's nice," I say when he's done. Then I quickly scoot my chair back and head for the shower. Under the spray, the meat juices wash from my fingernails, from my pores. I tilt my head back and let the water stream down my face until I can't tell anymore where the water ends and my tears begin.

Armando comes in after me. He knows this is my place to cry. He peels off his clothes and steps into the stall and tries to hold me. His dark, moppish hair sticks to the sides of his face. His skin slips over mine. He pushes me out of the water and examines my eyes. "Are the tears gone now?"

I shrug.

"Tell me, Mireya," he pleads. It's the split second of something in his voice that, despite everything else, makes me love him.

"I think they're just starting," I say.

He bends down and licks one cheek, then the other, gently, with the tip of his tongue. "I'll get them," he says, and he does.

My father cleaned government buildings at night. He came home in the early morning hours, high on ammonia and bleach, and made my mother prepare dinner for him in the dark. When he worked overtime, she cooked dinner as the sun rose. Many nights, the smell of spicy chicken or *ropa vieja* woke me and I knew that my father had just arrived. During the day, he should have been sleeping, but more often he was out in bars or with other women or smoking on our front step, ashes fluttering in the air like confetti. My mother was never happy with him. I mean, she must have been at one time, but I'd never witnessed it. I'd hear her, at night, through the thin walls, sobbing in her room.

She knew about everything my father did—I often heard them arguing about his carryings-on—but, for all her strength, she was never able to stop him and never able to walk away. There was one time when I thought she came close. My father had taken a job cleaning houses during the day and at some point he started returning home with hair dryers, mixing bowls, toaster ovens, picture frames. Of course, we knew where these things were coming from. No one said anything, though, until a police officer showed up at our house one afternoon asking questions. It was easy enough to get rid of him—my father offered him a speaker system—but I'd never seen my mother so angry. For a whole week, she spoke to him only once, when she told him, "You shamed me."

The only time I even saw a moment of affection between them was much later, after Jano had married and I had moved out on my own. My father had retired, and they were living off his pension and the odd lottery payout. My mother had asked me to get some melons at the stand near my house and bring them over. She was very particular about which melons she deemed acceptable. When I got there, the front door was wide open and inside I saw them, sitting on our old peach-colored couch, my father at one end and my mother stretched out at the other, her feet propped on his lap. He was tickling the soles of her feet with his fingertips and she was flinching, but laughing. Then he reached over and cupped her hair behind her ear. She followed the movement of his hand with her head, like a horse. That was all. But there was real tenderness in it.

Armando is Argentinean, a different breed. We met when I was on my way out of work one afternoon, heading for the bus. He must have been standing there for hours, surveying every so-and-so who walked by. I'm not beautiful. I know that. I'm just this girl with my mother's squash-shaped body, and dense black hair and a mole on my right cheek. But I always thought it meant something that he seized on me. Came right up to me and said, "You look like you could use a decent meal. Can I take you out?" He had on brown slacks and a white linen shirt. I brushed him off at first.

"What's your name?" he asked.

"Mireya."

He stopped in his tracks, playing. "That's perfect," he said. "The reservation is under Mireya."

It was such a line. But I liked the idea of going someplace where we would need a reservation, so I said yes.

We ended up at one of the best steak houses in Panama City, this spot with gold doors that have an image of a bull carved into them. It was the first and last time we ever went out to a dinner like that. He paid for the whole thing, and I ate as much as I could get in me. At the end of the meal, he asked if he could sleep on my floor for a few nights. Told me that he'd just arrived in Panama and didn't know anyone and didn't want to go back to Argentina because of some issue with his parents. I found out later it was money—his wealthy parents had finally told him he needed to find a job or get out. The idea of a job was distasteful to a person like Armando, so he got out. That night, though, he said he would pay me for a place on the floor, which he never did. And he promised to keep his hands to himself, which he didn't. But he seemed harmless enough. So there, in the steak house, my belly warm and full, I said yes.

Carina, at work, says I only fell for him out of habit. The habit of seeing him every day. She says, "Imagine someone put a plate with a nice big pork chop on it in front of you. But you felt like a hamburger, so you said no thanks. And then the next day they brought you a plate with another big pork chop. And the next day and the next day. Eventually, you would start wanting it, even though in the beginning you had no interest. Right?"

"Armando's not a pork chop," I say.

She shrugs. "At least a pork chop would feed you."

Two days pass and I still can't get myself together. It's like a small animal pounces on me every day, clawing at me, tearing me to shreds. I go outside on my break and sit on the concrete step behind Casa de la Carne by myself. The ground is slick with grease and mangy dogs sniff around my feet, but I'm too ruined to care. When my time is over, I mop up my face and reassemble my hair into a ponytail.

I can't stop thinking about the fact that my mother's gone, though. It's bad. I cut my finger twice on the slicer before the day's even rolled around to lunchtime. When I tell them I don't care and that I don't want to wear the steel-mesh gloves while I cut, they send me home.

Armando's on his back on the couch, his socked feet up on the arm, reading. The whole place smells like the sweat from his socks.

"What are you doing here?" he asks, startled, when I come in.

"They sent me home."

"You were fired?" He looks terrified.

For a second, I have this impulse to answer yes, to tell him he's the one who has to find a job now, figure out a way to support us both, just to see what he would do.

I shrug. "They just sent me home."

He purses his lips and looks away, at nothing, like he's weighing what this might mean.

"What? You have someone coming over?" I ask.

"No."

He cheated on me once, when we first started, with this girl who had air-conditioning at her place. He told me about it because he would sleep there—no mosquitoes, no night sweats. He claimed it had nothing to do with her, but there were a few nights during a blackout when he went over there just the same. So. He might have left me for her at some point, I don't know, but she moved to the United States, anyway.

"I'm trying to finish this book by tomorrow," he says, holding up what's in his hand. "You won't bother me, right?"

"I'm going to make lunch." I raise my hand to show him the bandages, but he's already back to his book.

"Meatballs and *patacones* for me?" he asks hopefully. "Oh, and your papi called. I think it was him. He said it was him at first, and then he kept saying he had the wrong number. The man is messed up, Mireya. You guys should put him in a hospital, you know?"

I glare at him as he reads. I unwrap the tape and gauze—pink with my blood—from my fingers, balancing them in my hand, and consider throwing them at him. But I don't. I just leave them at his feet to see if he'll even notice.

I call my father back that night. Zenia answers. She's never liked me. I think when she and Jano started together, years ago, he told her not to trust me. My brother has always suffered from the belief that I came into the world to steal my parents' attention from him. When I was younger, he claimed that for the entire ride to the hospital while my mother was in labor with me, she had shouted, "I don't want it!" "You see?" he said. "Even then she knew you were a bad idea." My mother heard him and swatted him on the arm so hard that a patch of red bloomed on his skin.

"Is my father there?" I ask.

"He's having a good time here, you know."

"Please, Zenia. I want to talk to him."

She sighs. "*Momentito*."

"*Aló*?" he says, when he gets on the phone. "Who is this?"

"It's Mireya."

"*La Presidenta*?"

"No. It's me. Your daughter."

It sounds like he's chewing on something.

"How are you doing?" I ask.

"Fine. There's a fan in my bedroom," he says.

"What are you eating?"

"I'm drinking."

"You're chewing your drink?"

He's quiet.

"Are you O.K. over there? Are you happy?"

"I miss you," he says, unexpectedly. I wonder if he even knows who he's talking to.

"Me?"

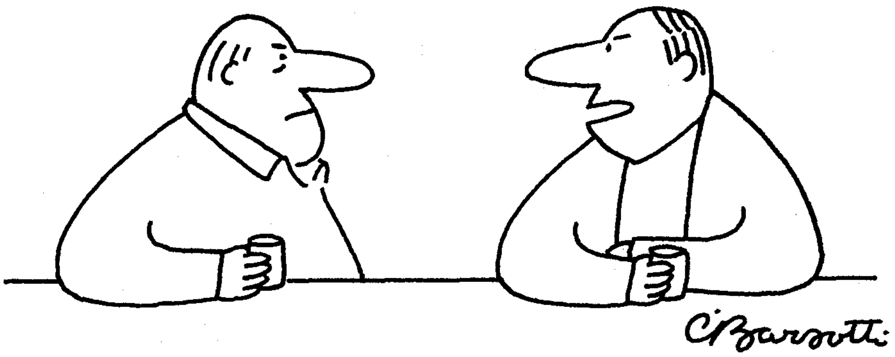
"That fan makes a lot of noise, though."

"I'll tell Jano to fix it for you."

"I used to live in my own house. Is that right?"

"Yes."

He's silent again.



"We've got the leadership you deserve."

"Do you want me to come visit you?" I ask.

My father was drunk almost every day while I was growing up. He was hardly around, a shadow of a father. It's no secret that Jano and I hardened ourselves to him. But, still, it's amazing how much I want him to say yes.

"Our dinner is ready," he says instead.

"O.K., Papi."

"We're having *arroz con pollo*."

"I'm going to get off now. I'll see you in a few days."

"Yes. It would be very nice to see the President."

"Goodbye, Papi."

When I show up at Casa de la Carne the next day, Carina pulls me aside and asks what I'm doing there. "I thought you got fired," she says. I assure her I was just sent home early because of personal problems. She shakes her head at me, her gold hoop earrings swaying against her jaw. "No," she says, drawing it out as if the word were a rubber band. "I think you should talk to Tino." But as soon as she says it I understand. I didn't wear the gloves, which is a safety violation, which is a big deal. I was an idiot to think that they were just giving me some time off to pull myself together. Tino confirms it.

I don't go home right away, though. I get on the bus to my parents' house. They lived on a sloping street where the houses press against one another, side by side, like children in a line holding hands. Theirs looks like all the others: a big cement patio out front, bars over the windows, wire trash bins held up on poles by the curb. I open the gate and step onto the patio. For some reason I'm feeling nervous, like I'm trespassing, like someone else has already taken over this house. Even so, I'm doing O.K. until I notice the chair where I last saw my mother. The seat cushion is still flattened from her weight, the imprint of her bottom depressed into the foam. It splits my heart in two. I take a few deep breaths and make my way to the chair. Slowly, I lower myself into the impression she formed. The air is steaming hot, the sun piercing. I sit for as long as I can take it, and then I have to leave.

Memories are thin, watery and fragile, like gas rising off the pavement on the hottest days. But there are times I can see clearly.

I was eight. We had driven to my Tía Cre's house for a party. The boys abandoned us, locking themselves in a room doing who knows what, but no one asked because they were boys and anything was permissible. My cousin Juanita and I went down to the spiny shores of the bay, rooting around in the small pools between the rocks for snails and crabs. This was my mother's favorite place. She was forever reminiscing about growing up in a house on the bay, about the days when she and Tía Cre basically lived among the rocks and on the crescent of sand at their base.

My cousin and I were barefoot, and the ocean rolled in far enough at times to lick the rocks until they glistened. I was stepping down from one rock to another when I slipped. My feet shot out in front of me and I fell backward. My spine landed flat on a rock and my head snapped back against a rough crest of stone. I must have blacked out for a few seconds. When I was conscious again, I reached back and felt the blood, sticky in my hair. I had a gash like a long slug, just behind my ear. My cousin ran screaming back to the house. I don't remember much between then and when my mother arrived.

I saw her bending over me. I saw the sunlight filtering through her black hair, curled at the tips. There was a look of consternation on her face; she looked like she wanted to slap me but couldn't bring herself to do it. She had a white apron around her waist—she must have been helping Tía Cre in the kitchen—and I remember it fluttering over me as she leaned down and scooped me up in her arms.

The blood stopped soon enough. Tía Cre cleaned and bandaged me. The adults were worried and then not worried. My father looked at me blandly—he was drunk—and declared that I would be fine. Jano came out of the bedroom carrying a joystick, the cord stretching all the way across the floor. He peered at me, and then walked away shrugging. I think he thought I was just creating a show to get attention. To prove him wrong, I bit my lip to keep from crying. I haven't cried in front of my family since.

In my cousin's dark bedroom, the windows wide open, the curtains blowing, my mother stayed with me while the party went on. She climbed into bed with me and held me from behind.

"I'm not happy," she said.

"I didn't mean to do it," I told her.

"You aren't allowed to leave me, you know."

I could smell the vegetable oil and cooking gas that had crept into the fabric of her clothes and her hair.

"Everyone else can leave, but not you."

My head stung, pain pulsing around me like a halo. I could hear the muffled sounds of the party through the door—ice clinking in glasses, spontaneous riots of laughter, a faint thread of music.

"I'm sorry," I said.

She sighed and then pinched a bit of skin on my arm and twisted it. I knew then that she really *had* wanted to hit me back on the rocks. The pinch was a compromise.

"Be more careful," she said. "From now on, you do that for me."

The day before the funeral, I'm cruising around town on the bus. There's not much else to do. Everyone still thinks I have a job, so I have to leave the house during the day.

The bus is maybe a kilometre out when, through the window, I see Armando. From the back, but I can tell it's him. He's walking with his arm around a woman's shoulder, her arm around his waist. Her wrist drips with jewelry, expensive-looking stuff, the kind you could get only at a place like Mercurio. I get off at the next stop and walk back toward them.

I'm about ten metres away when Armando sees me. He drops his arm from the woman's shoulder. "You're not at work," he says when I'm close enough.

"I don't work there anymore."

The woman next to him is wearing big, round sunglasses that are probably designer.

"What do you mean?"

"I just don't." I stare unblinkingly at the woman as I say it. I can't see her eyes, but I can see her eyebrows above the sunglasses.

"Hey," he says. It's that soft "hey" he gives me sometimes in the middle of the night when he wants to wake me, because, he says, he misses me. Then he takes me by the arm and drags me a few steps away.

"Is that the same girl from before?" I ask. As soon as I say it, though, I realize I don't want the answer. Either way, it's bad.

He shakes his head.

"Who is she, then?"

"Mireya, please."

"How long have you been with her?" I say.

He shakes his head again.

"Tell me how long!"

"A few weeks, O.K.?"

"She's rich?"

"She gives me what I need." He looks defiant, suddenly. He's over his shame, or he's pretending to be over it.

"I don't? I go to work so you can eat!"

"Armando," the woman calls.

That's when I lay into him. Just sock him one in his chest. He stumbles backward and the next thing I know I'm lunging at him, tearing into his pockets, grabbing hold of what I can. He clutches my wrists, trying to pry my hands away. But I want it—whatever he has, I want it. With both of us pulling, the seam of his pocket rips and he starts yelling at me to stop, but I won't. He rams the top of his head against my shoulder, trying to create some distance between us. And somehow we end up on the ground, tiny pebbles pressing into my skin, the sidewalk baking underneath us. Faintly, I hear the woman saying "*Ay, Dios,*" again and again, and I catch glimpses of her towering over us as we fight. Finally, Armando manages to pull free of me and stand. I get up, too, and brush myself off.

The woman says, "Armando, this girl is crazy."

I'm a firestorm inside—everything exploding and burning—and I'm trying so hard not to talk, because I know if I do I'll cry.

Armando tells the woman to wait at the corner. You can tell she's not used to being instructed to do anything, especially by him. But she does it.

It doesn't help that eventually I would have left him anyway, or that anyone could have seen this coming, or that I always knew we were bound to fall apart.

We stare at each other, squinting in the sun. His face is light—he's always been too pale for this country—and shiny with sweat. I can't help thinking that there were moments when he was good to me. I wait for him to say something, but he doesn't. I feel weightless standing there, like I'm not sure if the soles of my shoes are connected to the sidewalk anymore.

"My mother was the only one in my family who liked you," I finally say. It's a petty impulse—wanting to hurt him because he hurt me—but I don't care.

He looks like I just slapped him. "Your mother?"

I grab my bag from the ground and start walking away.

I hear his shoes shuffle behind me for a second and then stop.

"What about you?" he yells. "Didn't you like me?"

It's such a heartbreaker. Because here's the answer: "Yes, I did. Who knows why, but I did." But right then I can't do it. I just walk away.

The funeral is what it is. I kiss a hundred cheeks and listen to a hundred stories about what a wonderful person my mother was. Everyone's asking where Armando is, but I say again and again that I don't want to get into it. Jano ran an obituary in the newspaper. He looks terrible, his nose red, his eyes swollen like little ravioli. Zenia, in a long-sleeved white dress, never leaves his side, her arm hooked through his. My father is seated in the front pew and I wave to him because I'm not sure what he would think if I hugged him.

At one point, Jano comes over and asks if I'm O.K.

"I'm fine," I tell him.

"Are you sure?"

"I'm sure." But I'm not.

When the time comes, I go up to say goodbye to her. I remember, when my grandmother died, walking up the church aisle, gripping my mother's hand. I was five. In my memory, the other people in the church are blurry, only watercolors. When my mother and I got to the casket, I could see my grandmother's face—powdery and calm. I wanted so badly to touch her; I stood there forever thinking about doing it, but I didn't know if I was allowed to. I didn't want to do it and make a scene, one that Jano would chide me for later. That afternoon, I asked my mother if I could have done it. She told me of course. For all these years, I've hated the fact that I didn't.

Now there's no casket, just a gold urn on a small table. What can I do? Reach my hand in? A photograph of my mother sits on an easel next to the urn. It's black-and-white, all soft edges and haze. She is too young for me to recognize her. I wonder, if I hadn't been her daughter, if I had just met this woman in the photograph at any time on the street, would I have liked her? But it's a stupid thing to wonder, because of course I would have. I would have loved her anytime.

When I'm done, I take a seat beside Papi. He smiles. His long, thin fingers are folded in his lap, and he looks as light and unbothered as a cloud.

"How are you?" I ask. I feel none of the anger I usually do around him.

"I tried to save her," he whispers, leaning sideways.

"I know, Papi," I say.

"Human beings can't save each other from anything, though."

"I'm sorry," I tell him, because I don't know what else there is to offer.

He nods. "Nothing to be sorry about."

"O.K.," I say, and he pats my knee.

Afterward, I take the urn with me. Jano has already said, without any discussion, that he will keep it at his house, but in my mind it's inconceivable that it could belong to anyone but me.

Holding the urn in my lap, I take a taxi straight to the bay, passing billboards and wire fences, fields of overgrown grass freckled with tiny flowers and small fires, ramshackle houses and brittle palm trees.

When we get to the bay, I pay the driver. He has a stern face and he simply nods before shooting off into the gathering darkness. I carry the urn over to the rocks and sit down, balancing it beside me. I take off the lid and reach my hand in, letting my fingertips graze the dust. Then I cover it again. I sit there for hours, my bottom growing damp from the glaze of water clinging to the rocks, and look out for anything I can see. ♦

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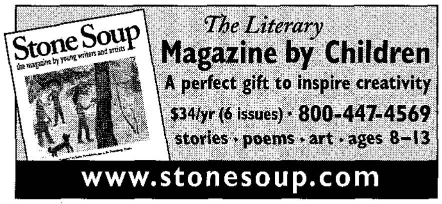
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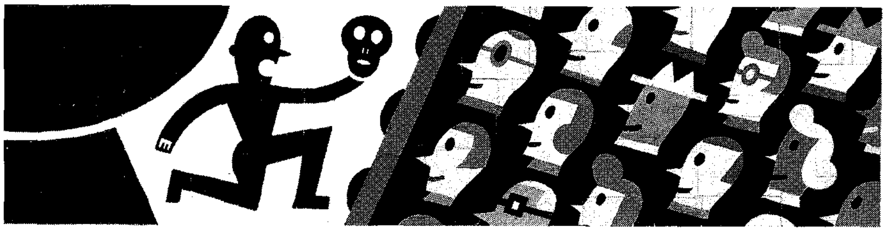


A CRITIC AT LARGE

THE DISAPPEARING POET

What ever happened to Weldon Kees?

BY ANTHONY LANE

It is almost half a century since San Francisco police found a 1954 Plymouth Savoy on the north side of the Golden Gate Bridge. On Tuesday, July 19, 1955, a highway patrol reported that the car, belonging to a Weldon Kees, had been discovered with the keys in the ignition. Two of Kees's friends, Michael Grieg and Adrian Wilson, went to search the apartment of the missing man. There they found, among other things, his cat, Lonesome, and a pair of red socks in a sink. His wallet, watch, and sleeping bag were missing. So was his savings-account book, although the balance, which stood at more than eight hundred dollars, would remain that way. There was no suicide note.

Nobody has seen or heard from Weldon Kees since Monday, July 18, 1955. That afternoon, he called two women who knew him well. The first was Janet Richards, who at that moment—one of those wrong and shapeless moments which dog the tragic—was heading out the door to fetch her mother-in-law from the airport. "Things are pretty bad," Kees said, adding, "I may go to Mexico. To stay." Richards was too distracted to offer help. "I felt like a murderer," she later said. Of the other woman he asked, at the end of the conversation, "What keeps *you* going?" She had been working as a writer and broadcaster in the Bay Area and beyond. Her name was Pauline Kael.

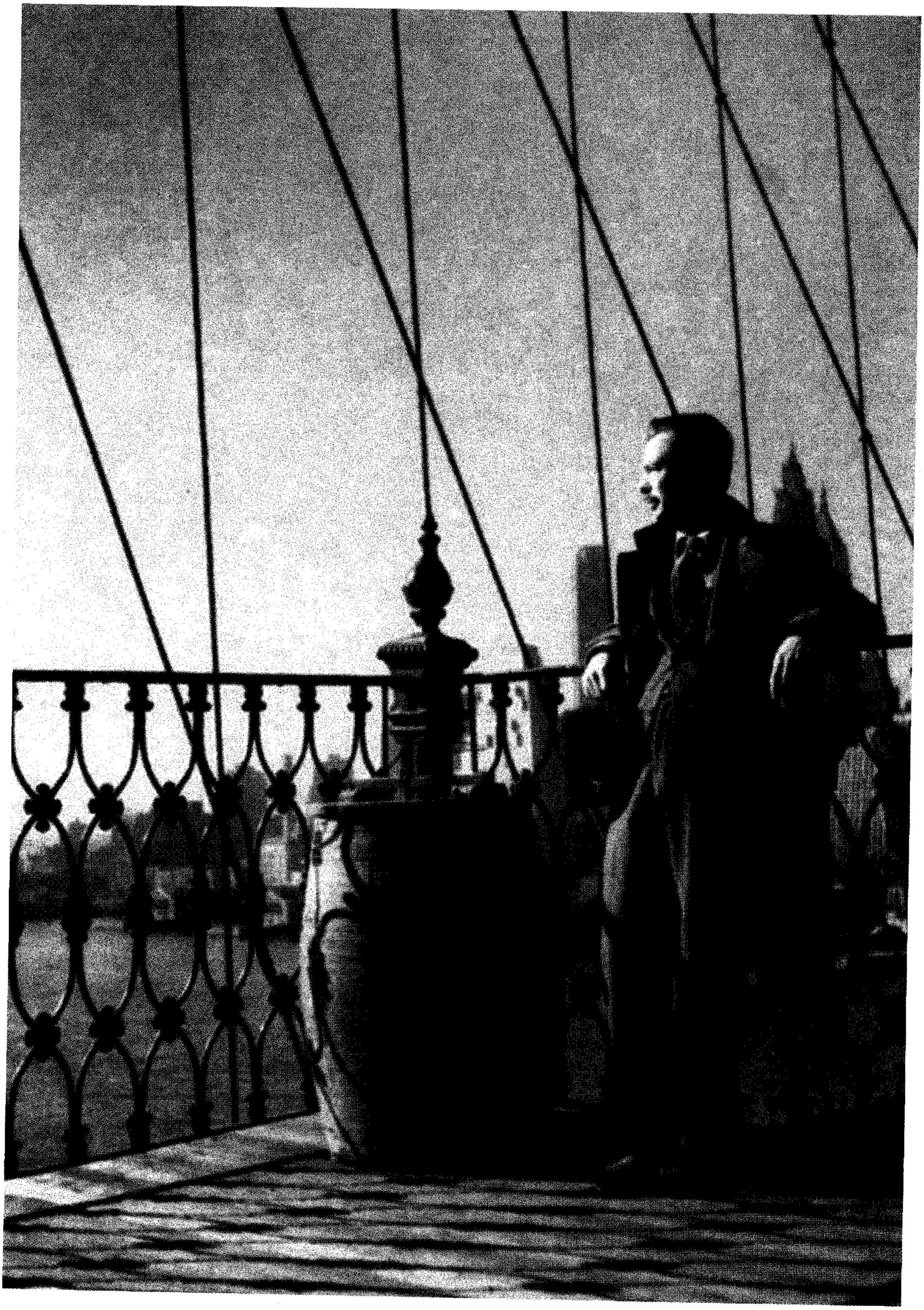
Kees had met her because he and Grieg ran a weekly radio broadcast on KPFA, out of Berkeley, called "Behind the Movie Camera," on which Kael had become a regular guest. Movies were one of Kees's passions: he had worked on newsreels in the nineteen-forties and had recently, in one of his loftier schemes, mooted the idea of a new production studio. It would bear the title San Francisco Films, and, according to Kees's assiduous biographer, James Reidel, would deliver "a cross between art-house foreign films and noir American B-movies." Kees himself was toiling on a script, a spy thriller called "Gadabout," and was discussing another with Hugh Kenner, whose magisterial years as a critic, like those of Kael, were soon to come. (So many famous names enter the story of Kees. He seemed to drift into their orbit for a while, then spin away.) Yet it is not as a filmmaker that he would wish to be remembered. Nor can we even be sure of such a wish.

On January 22nd of that final year, he and a few kindred spirits had put together an event called "Poets' Follies," a mishmash of readings, music, and dance. It was poised, like so many Keesian schemes, between old and new, a rickety fusion of post-twenties burlesque and pre-sixties art happening. Kees read some of his work, as did a local poet by the name of Lawrence Ferling. (It would stretch, over time, into the more exotic Ferlinghetti.) A stripper was hired from Oakland to sashay onstage and declaim some T. S. Eliot, a move of which he would surely have approved. There was a jazz band, with Kees on standup piano. They played a version of "I Ain't Gonna Give Nobody None o' This Jelly Roll." Kees was introduced as "Mr. Weldon Kees, poet, painter, artist, etcetera, composer, critic, etcetera, etcetera, ad infinitum."

Half a century later, what remains? Most people have never heard of Kees. A handful may hum and frown, then mention an anthology of verse in which his name cropped up. Longtime readers of this magazine may recall a poem or two that appeared in these pages. "The Collected Poems of Weldon Kees," edited by Donald Justice, was published in 1960. There has been a devout effort to revive, or perhaps create, his reputation, yet the impact has been limited. Something about Kees, in his afterlife as in his life, feels determined to elude any ambitions we may harbor on his behalf. Poets seem more readily enthused than scholars by his example, yet even that enthusiasm has a gleam of the cultish, as if Kees had hailed from (and returned to) a flickering underworld. Every now and then, one finds a fellow-Keesian—somebody who has picked up the scent of the mysterious figure and followed the trail. And that trail always leads to the same place. Not to the movies, or to the paintings; not to the short stories, or to the fruitless novels; not even to the poems, the crucible and crown of his achievement. Instead, we are led ad infinitum: to the Golden Gate, and to the empty Plymouth; to what did or did not happen next, and so to the reflection, as in a rearview mirror, of all that had come before.

Harry Weldon Kees was born in 1914 in Beatrice, Nebraska. That may be the most important thing about him. As an adult, he gravitated to hubs and hotbeds, on both coasts, yet one rarely gathers the sense, on reading the testimony of his colleagues, of a man with his heart in the metropolis. For the mid-century artist of any kind, the city was inescapable. Even if you chose not to live there, you had to grapple with the millions who did. Yet the figure cut by Kees—visibly so, in many photographs of him—suggests not an insider but an intruder, somebody from out of town who may leave the party at any time. He mixed

Kees, on the Brooklyn Bridge, November, 1948: he spent seven years on the East Coast, but seems like a man who never unpacked.



and drank with writers and painters, but he never resembled them. It was as if the artistic look were surplus to requirements; or, rather, as if to don the outer crust of an insurance agent or an advertising man—to conduct oneself like the steady Nebraskan citizen that Kees might have stayed to become—struck him as the slyest of disguises, enabling him to slip his poems under the door, without being noticed or making a scene.

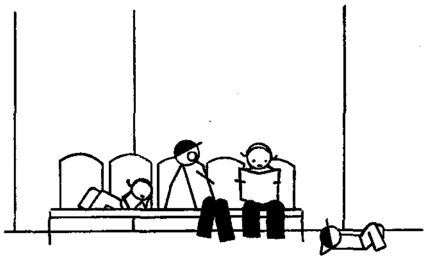
Kees came from German stock, and he entered a world of unexcitable prosperity. His father was John Kees, who ran the F. D. Kees Manufacturing Company, makers of hooks, handles, cornhuskers, and other items of hardware, and who at one time held the presidency of the Nebraska Manufacturers Association. He was a temperate soul, courteous and compact, with an unlikely width in his reading tastes. He was married to the firm-jawed Sarah, a more formidable presence in the consciousness of her son; any of us would duck our heads, perhaps, before a woman so gripped by her clannish past that she joined a society entitled Americans of Royal Descent. Kees—an only child, one is unsurprised to learn—was educated at Beatrice High School. He was also a Boy Scout with a knack for telling ghost stories, and a movie nut, whose review of a talking picture (the first he had ever seen) was published in the Beatrice *Daily Sun*. His boyhood unfolded in what he called the "civilized, elegant, and lush world of the Wilson-Harding-Coolidge years." Lusher for some than for others, one might add, and what matters is that Kees the poet, when recalling Kees the child, rubbed some of the shine off the myth, as in a poem called "1926":

> The porchlight coming on again,
> Early November, the dead leaves
> Raked in piles, the wicker swing
> Creaking. Across the lots
> A phonograph is playing *Ja-Da.*
>
> An orange moon. I see the lives
> Of neighbors, mapped and marred
> Like all the wars ahead, and R.
> Insane, B. with his throat cut,
> Fifteen years from now, in Omaha.
>
> I did not know them then.
> My airedale scratches at the door.
> And I am back from seeing Milton Sills
> And Doris Kenyon. Twelve years old.
> The porchlight coming on again.

How would the editors of the *Daily Sun* feel about printing that? One imagines them wilting beneath the sardonic violence of the second paragraph, which spreads into the fond, neat stitching of the other stanzas (Sills and Kenyon were movie stars of the period) like a creeping stain. As so often with Kees, the most needling line is the plainest: "I did not know them then." What a fine balance it strikes, implying both "my childhood was happy, since you ask, kept away from such mortal things," and also, "how little I knew of the world—a world we ought to know—and of the damage it can wreak."

In the fall of 1931, Kees went on to Doane College, in nearby Crete. There he acted, wrote, and played piano in a jazz trio—taking the place of another Nebraska boy, Spangler Arlington Brugh, who would soon leave behind both his state and, understandably, his name, and reappear in Hollywood as Robert Taylor. After a brief sojourn at the University of Missouri at Columbia, Kees entered the University of Nebraska at Lincoln, in 1934. Even as he arrived, his first short story, "Saturday Rain," was published in the *Prairie Schooner*, a literary journal of some heft, edited by a professor at the university named Lowry C. Wimberly. For the next year, Kees labored on a novel, "Slow Parade," which was never published, and of which no copy exists. Given that he was deep into a groove of Joyce and Dos Passos—Wimberly is described in one letter as wearing "a double-breasted robinseggblue suit with clarkgable pockets and a shirred back"—the loss is not unbearable.

From here on, the rhythm of Kees's life followed no steady beat. His studies were peripatetic at best—delayed graduation at Lincoln, graduate school in Chicago—and the restiveness stayed in his blood. On a whim, though partly in pursuit of a college friend named Ann Swan, he headed west, to Los Angeles, at the start of 1936. If there were hopes that Brugh, now a movie star, would welcome a fellow-Nebraskan and ease him into Hollywood society, or a job on the lot, they were quickly dashed. Back in Lincoln, Kees spun out his time on the production of a new guide to the state, sponsored by the Federal Writers' Project. There he made a friend in Norris Getty, who remembered Kees as a ferocious editor—"a good deal of pencil lead was worn away." Next, as if trying anything that came to mind, Kees began a degree in library science at the University of Denver. There, on October 3, 1937, he married Ann. He noted the joyful event in a letter on the eve of the wedding before passing on to matters of greater weight, such as the clientele of the Denver Public Library.



Again, there is a spectral, somewhat Jamesian suggestion of a man who manages to be absent from his own life. Even as we sieve the evidence of the poems, the stories, and the correspondence, their creator is removed from the picture; we are like homicide detectives, chalking a white outline around the space where Weldon Kees used to be. Politically, he tilted to the left, but his undemonstrative bearing, like his suit and brogues, told a more upright tale. Robert E. Knoll, who put together "Weldon Kees and the Midcentury Generation," a choice of Kees's letters with a running commentary, points out that "he may have looked like a 'pinko' to Gage County, Nebraska, but to the urban crowd of *The New Masses*, which he read, he was Old Guard." Photographs show him reluctant to smile, armed with a cigarette as if with a dagger, and graced with a trim mustache: thus equipped, he came closer than any other American author, living or dead, to looking like Howard Hughes.

The Keeses stayed in Denver, with occasional escapes. I especially like the level-toned report that he sent of Portland, Oregon: "I think it unlikely that there has been any sexual intercourse there in some years." Meanwhile, his short stories were attracting notice. One of them, "The Life of the Mind," appeared in "Best Short Stories" in 1941. Some Keesians have argued the case for the fiction, viewing it as a solid achievement that should run alongside the poems. The ardent Kees scholar Dana Gioia has edited a selection of forty-three tales and sketches, all of which give off a sour particularity that feels difficult to shake. The one Kees novel that we possess, "Fall Quarter," completed in 1941, is a dexterous addition to the genre of the campus saga. Its youthful protagonist takes a teaching post at a Midwestern college, and soon succumbs to the bleary epidemic of disillusion that infects his colleagues. No publisher was content with Kees's effort (it became available only in 1990), and what it leaves behind is little more than the reek of provincial observation—tart, miniature scenes served up by the narrator like a shot of rye. "He was about thirty-eight and looked like the sort of person who always orders the fruit cup on the sixty-five cent dinner." "There was a noise from the bathroom, and a gnarled little woman, carrying a black oilcloth bag, emerged and walked through the room." Images like these tend to drift, unattached, through a page of Kees's prose. If they want to find a home, they need a poem.

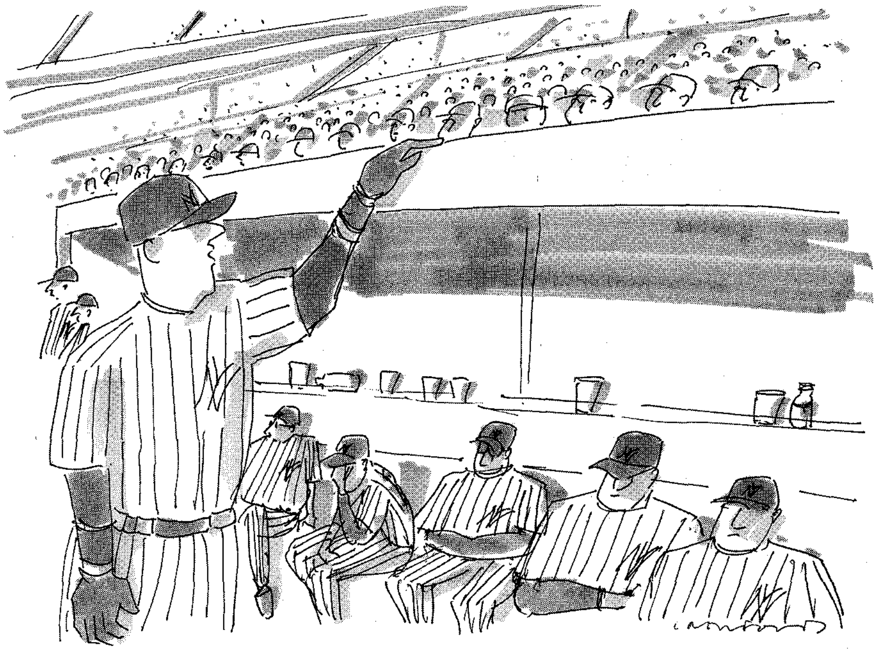
At some indefinable point, Kees summoned the nerve, denied to weaker writers, to strip down the workings of his talent and see what functioned best. "I'm not doing what I want to do; is anyone?" he asked in a letter of 1938. A year and a half later, in another letter, he answered his own plea: "I have been writing quite a little poetry." Notice that there is no declaration of intent, no banner raised: merely a furtive determination to track down the voice that would best allow him to speak his mind, or to dramatize the minds of others. By 1941, he had amassed thirty-nine poems, enough to fill a book, "The Last Man," which two years later finally crawled into print. From the opening poem, "Subtitle," we feel ourselves to be in the presence of a Masonic plan: a politely coded scheme to shift around the furniture of our daily lives, and to see what the rearrangement brings by way of enchantment and threat.

We request these things only:
All gum must be placed beneath the seats
Or swallowed quickly, all popcorn sacks
Must be left in the foyer. The doors
Will remain closed throughout
The performance. Kindly consult
Your programs: observe that
There are no exits. This is
A necessary precaution.

It would be tricky to visit a cinema after this and not suffer a crackle of disquiet. Kees was never the kind of person to shout "Fire!" in a crowded theatre, but he might have been the sort to croon it in the ear of an usherette. He makes it his business to put us at our unease.

This is not to say that the business always succeeds. More than half the poems falter and fail, either because they try too hard ("Can you hear the worthless morning's mirth?") or because they lunge disastrously at the surreal ("Impromptu unicorns enact ballets, / Applauded by bourgeoisie in negligée"). Still more of them are so profoundly in hock to the work of Kees's masters that they barely evince any vital signs of their own. The wistful imperative of "Put on your hat, put on your gloves. / But there isn't any love, there isn't any love" could be issued only by someone whose bedside table creaked with too much Auden and MacNeice, while the debt to Eliot collapses into blatant homage: "Elizabethans had/ Sweeneys and Mrs. Porters too." And yet, now and then, something new shows through—a glimpse of a dented mind, buckling beneath terrors both immanent and unexplained. Warnings are delivered, in language as clear as an office memo, to the watchful:

Pull the curtains to the sill,
Darken the rooms, cut all the wires.
Crush the embers as they fall
From the dying fires:
Things are not going well.



"Anybody up there need an autograph?"

• •

Were things going well for Kees? To say that he was received with open arms when he moved to New York, in 1943, would be pushing it, but he was unquestionably received. *Partisan Review* had already published his poetry and criticism, and on previous trips the right introductions had been made. Even then, as early as 1940, his proud reports from the cultural core were dotted and distanced with mockery: "Mr. and Mrs. Dwight Macdonald entertained a select group of their friends last night at their Greenwich Village apartment, the honored out-of-town guests being Mr. Richard Eberhart, Mr. Morton Dauwen Zabel, and Mr. Weldon Kees. Those present were Mr. and Mrs. Lionel Trilling, Mr. and Mrs. Walker Evans, Mr. Philip Rahv . . ." And so on. Three years later, the name-drops had acquired an acid tinge. At one get-together, an argument develops about the correct pronunciation of Randall Jarrell's name. ("Accent on the last syllable, says Edmund Wilson.") At another:

> There were people there you never expected to see, like Graham Greene, looking like a pasty elderly edition of one of his weaker heroes; and people you thought were permanently settled in sanataria, like Jean Stafford, looking more ravaged and nervous than you had thought possible; and people you thought were in Europe, like Janet Flanner and people who did not quite seem to fit in to a party for Stephen Spender, like Clifton Fadiman and Max Lerner. . . . When people left, they said, What a lovely party! Thank you so much. See you soon.

That coda is the authentic note of horror: not just Kees's own distaste but the Hamlet-like horror that we have all felt, quite suddenly, at the prospect of drowning in society—even if it is a society that has welcomed us, and in which we should profitably swim. Kees remained on the East Coast for seven years, and yet, in accounts of that stay, he seems like a man who never unpacked. "By the winter of 1949-50 I would have settled for Atchison or Lone Pine, Ark.," he told a friend. The sociable solitary is an easily pained but far from unusual breed; one distinguishing characteristic is that farewells are forever on the brink of being made.

The loneliness came with a twist. Observe that at the Macdonald soirée he was "Mr. Weldon Kees." A month before going to New York, he had written to Norris Getty, "Ann and I are separating: that is one item.* Her address will be 418 E. Center, Douglas, Wyoming." The asterisk referred to a postscript: "Please say nothing of this." Once again, the Keesian upheaval was no sooner registered than hushed up. Four months later, the rift was apparently healed ("Ann and I are together again and have a remarkably cool apartment on lower Fifth Avenue & 10th street"), but we know no more of its causes than we do of the wartime draft classification that marked Kees as 4F, describing him as "psychologically unfit for service." In retrospect, what is remarkable about the cataclysm of 1955 is that it took so long to come. He somehow considered it his duty, as a scion of the Kees Manufacturing Company, to wrest and tamp his miseries underground—a guarantee, needless to say, that they would eventually explode. There is no more volatile compound known to man than that of decorum and despair.

In the case of Kees, only a few friends realized what was going on. "As a social being," Janet Richards wrote, "he was funny, joking, and always in good spirits." Any lowering of those spirits, and the drawbridge was pulled up, as Richards makes clear: "I never heard him refer to, or reply to, a profundity. Instead, Weldon could bring all his trivia together during an evening, and on the way home you felt you had just glimpsed the grave." Only in the poems do the glimpses start to multiply. Nowhere else, in life or in art, did Kees seem at liberty to master his shame and to display its unsavory spoils. His second book, "The Fall of the Magicians," came out in 1947. Technically, it leapt adroitly forward from the first. Spiritually, it plunged downward and barely paused for breath, as these fragments prove:

Men we once honored share a crooked eye.
We can do nothing more than mourn.
The girls we loved will marry them, and die.
—"*Five Villanelles.*"

"—Your face is never clear. You always stand
In charcoal doorways in the dark. Part of your face
Is gone. You say, 'Just to be through with this damned world.
Contagious fogs blow in. Christ, we could die
The way deer sometimes do, their antlers locked,
Rotting in snow.'
—"*Girl at Midnight.*"

Only a suburban house with the front door open
And a dog barking at a squirrel, and the cars
Passing. The corpse quite dead. The wife in Florida.
—"*Crime Club.*"

Those last lines bear an odd yet definite kinship with the death of Charlotte Haze, in "Lolita"—the dire circumstance cutting, all but comically, through the quiet, well-kept day. By then, Kees had forsaken fiction, yet the narrative impetus did not abate; instead, it was filtered, in concentrated form, into the poems. It was these which served to tell his American stories, pouring forth his annotations of urban mores—the backchat, the outfits, the migraine-heavy climate, and the vain attempts to loosen the city's grip—and mixing them, drop by drop, with the chill of his bad dreams.

Not that Kees neglected his career. In one year, 1943, he found work at *The New Republic*, thanks to Alfred Kazin, then moved to *Time*, where he reviewed first books, then music (which allowed him to interview one of his enduring heroes, Fats Waller), and lastly cinema. The task soon got him down, as did the movies: "Our readers don't want to hear you groan," his editor said, which was, and remains, a fair point. So, being Kees, he switched to making films. He was hired by the Paramount News Service to write scripts for newsreels, at seventy-five dollars a week. If he was unqualified to serve his country, the least he could do was to give it an honest picture of what the fighting meant; as brutal footage came in from Iwo Jima, in the spring of 1945, Kees (whose duties now included editing) and the rest of the Paramount staff worked twenty-hour days to render it fit for public consumption. The result was singled out for praise by James Agee.

As if that were not enough, Kees began to paint. One is torn between marvelling at his facility in disparate media and wondering what levels of uncertainty he could stomach. "Why don't you want to be a *success*?" asked Truman Capote, to whom such diffidence was inconceivable. Kees presents a stubborn case; there are few accusations more withering than that of dilettantism, and his own multitasking seems to have been powered by self-exasperation. Yet any amusement at the chop and change of his interests must be tempered by the

"Mom, Dad, this is Kevin, our new ombudsman."

nagging fact of his competence. He was lucky, hitting town in time for the rise of the New York School, but he was also quick to learn, befriending Hans Hofmann, writing with grit and sympathy of Motherwell and Miró, and succeeding his friend Clement Greenberg as art critic of *The Nation*, in 1949. Most stylish of all, he bought a 1938 Plymouth from Mark Rothko. "Looks a little like an unmade bed in a Bowery fleabag," Kees wrote. He named the car Tiresias.

In the meantime, he schooled himself in gouache, oil, and, most profitably, collage. He had four one-man shows on East Twelfth Street; his work was picked for the Whitney Annual exhibit, in 1950, and hung beside that of Picasso, Mondrian, and de Kooning at the Kootz Gallery that same year. Nobody should make extravagant claims for what was, after all, a series of visual experiments; nor, however, is there any cause for embarrassment in viewing the outcome—the rough bulbousness of a typical Kees, with its bestiary of Miró-haunted shapes, treading the verges of abstraction. According to James Reidel, in "Vanished Act: The Life and Art of Weldon Kees" (2003), Kees the painter "felt freer than he did as a poet." If so, it was because he lacked the means to train or curb that freedom. On the page, he mastered some of the most treacherous poetic forms, incuding the sestina and the villanelle; on the canvas, such suavity was beyond him.

Kees and his wife spent much of 1949 in Provincetown. There he ran a cultural forum, crammed with painters and writers, and loaded with public debates on American responsibility, Soviet bureaucracy, and, just to lighten the tone, "What Is an Artist?" One is hardly taken aback to find that, by 1950, the Keeses had had enough. New York and its outposts had drained the couple dry, and vice versa. In the fall of that year, they bought a new car and drove across the country—a pilgrimage recorded in the ravishing Hopper-like plainness of the poem "Travels in North America":

And possibly the towns one never sees are best,
Preserved, remote, and merely names and distances.
Cadiz, Kentucky, "noted for the quality of hams it ships,
The home of wealthy planters,". . .

. . . Here is Milpitas,
California, filling stations and a Ford
Assembly plant. Here are the washboard roads
Of Wellfleet, on the Cape, and summer light and dust.
And here, now textured like a blotter, like the going years
And difficult to see, is where you are, and where I am,
And where the oceans cover us.

Such was Kees's idea of a journey: an adventure without the thrills. Once the two of them made it to San Francisco, the ruefulness gathered pace. Kees pursued fresh projects: scoring one experimental short film for a friend, and shooting another, "Hotel Apex," of his own devising. He sent ideas for cartoons to Charles Addams, who kindly refused them. A collection of poems, "A Breaking and a Death," was sent to publishers, and racked up twenty rejections in a row. "If the situation of poets continues to worsen at the same galloping rate it has been in recent years," he wrote to some friends,

> let's go down into the abyss. It won't be a really *awful* abyss: there'll be a lot of charming & good things in it: just no poets, that's all. Maybe we need a Byron to get the public interested in poetry again, though Byron's public wasn't any more interested in poetry than people today are: they were interested in Byron. I don't know *what* people are interested in today: but I can guess, and it ain't pretty.

That is the best of Kees the correspondent: historically acute, casually appalled, demotic to the point of bluesy as the mood turns black. By an irony too sharp for any poet, the one book that did appear with his name on the spine was "Nonverbal Communication," by Jurgen Ruesch and Weldon Kees. Ruesch was a Swiss-born psychologist at the Langley Porter Clinic, in Berkeley. Soon after arriving in California, Kees had been asked to help Ruesch with the shooting and cutting of a documentary on the interaction of mothers and children; it went well, and the final flowering was a large-format book—hundreds of photographs of human behavior and inhuman objects, interspersed with an academic text whose wry polish smells inescapably of Kees: "When people are alone, they frequently behave as if they were in company; and when in company, they often behave as if they were alone."

All of this kept Kees both paid and entertained, but that was insufficient. Ann had begun to drink heavily, and the booze was laced with paranoia. The national mood seeped into her. She claimed that the telephone was tapped, and that F.B.I. agents lurked outside the house. In Reidel's dispiriting words, "To maintain the appearance of normalcy, Kees claimed to be too busy, to be suffering from a frantic schedule." But even his gracious manners and chin-up assurances ("In between convulsions, I'm working away at poems," he told a friend) could not halt a slide of such proportions. On September 22, 1954, he wrote about Ann to Conrad Aiken:

> About eight or nine months ago she got to drinking more than you, me, Malcolm Lowry and Tallulah Bankhead put together. . . . Two nights a nice MD next door shot her full of sodium amytal, and occasionally she would have a lucid moment. . . . Finally, on Tuesday morning I got hold of one of the few psychiatrists around here of any real help on such cases and she finally agreed to sign herself in at Langley Porter Clinic. She improved greatly there, but left against advice after three weeks. We are now separated and she has agreed to a divorce, and I hope she will be all right. We were married for sixteen years and a lot of it was not so good.

It breaks the heart to see a writer roll out the Hemingway hard-man line like this, as if a little toughness in the prose could stop the world from caving in. By then, Kees was landing punches only on himself. His eagerness for new ventures, social and artistic, swelled into a kind of fever. He moved into a small apartment, alone, at the age of forty, and started to forge new and startling friendships. The place was soon a parody of the bachelor pad: black towels in the bathroom, black sheets on the bed. Kees took a lover, a divorcée named Jerry MacAgy, but confessed to being wearied by the sex. He thought himself unleashed from a marriage, but nobody who loved him could fail to notice the mania in that release. According to Michael Grieg, "I felt it was on the tip of his tongue: 'If I did not feel it was in bad taste, I would unburden myself. I am in despair. Let's go off where I can tell you about it.' But he never did." Kees's elderly mother wrote to her son to commiserate: "I think egg nogs at least three times a day would give you strength. A few graham crackers with them."

Kees was far from Nebraska, by this point, and beyond the reach of eggnogs. The path to the Golden Gate Bridge lay open and straight. Whether he leapt into the water on July 18, 1955, a foggy day, none of us can be sure. His attention had long been caught by suicides, such as that of Hart Crane. On the other hand, people recall his musing on the figure of Ambrose Bierce, another laconic, disenchanted citizen of San Francisco, who had upped and disappeared to Mexico in 1913. Reidel, at the end of his biography, cites an alluring report from a woman named Toni Barrett, who as a little girl had known Kees; she says she saw him again in New Orleans, with a blonde on his arm, in 1962. A BBC television documentary on Kees, broadcast in 1993, included an interview with the writer Pete Hamill, who drank with a stranger in Mexico and later claimed that he was Weldon Kees. These apparitions are impossible to forget, yet what can they add to our knowledge of a man who seemed, even when alive, like a dapper and dissatisfied ghost?

There is one witness. We have his name, and, should the authorities insist, we could offer a detailed description:

> Robinson at cards at the Algonquin; a thin
> Blue light comes down once more outside the blinds.
> Gray men in overcoats are ghosts blown past the door.
> The taxis streak the avenues with yellow, orange, and red.
> This is Grand Central, Mr. Robinson.
>
> Robinson on a roof above the Heights; the boats
> Mourn like the lost. Water is slate, far down.
> Through sounds of ice cubes dropped in glass, an osteopath,
> Dressed for the links, describes an old Intourist tour.
> —Here's where old Gibbons jumped from, Robinson.
>
> Robinson walking in the Park, admiring the elephant.
> Robinson buying the *Tribune*, Robinson buying the *Times*. Robinson
> Saying, "Hello. Yes, *this* is Robinson. Sunday
> At five? I'd love to. Pretty well. And you?"
> Robinson alone at Longchamps, staring at the wall.
>
> Robinson afraid, drunk, sobbing Robinson
> In bed with a Mrs. Morse. Robinson at home;
> Decisions: Toynbee or luminol? Where the sun
> Shines, Robinson in flowered trunks, eyes toward
> The breakers. Where the night ends, Robinson in East Side bars.
>
> Robinson in Glen plaid jacket, Scotch-grain shoes,
> Black four-in-hand and oxford button-down,
> The jeweled and silent watch that winds itself, the brief-
> Case, covert topcoat, clothes for spring, all covering
> His sad and usual heart, dry as a winter leaf.

It is that single word "usual" that brings you up short and lets the poem fan out. It points not just to the regularity of Robinson's own days and years but to the engulfing possibility of a thousand Robinsons out there, in the subway and on the streets, all ticking their lives away like his soundless watch. The poem, entitled "Aspects of Robinson," is *the* portrait of the postwar man of affairs: neither laborer nor magnate, but holding steady—and, at first blush, looking purposeful—within the middle rank. He is everything that Weldon Kees dreaded, as well as everything that he suspected he ought to be.

There are four Robinson poems in all, dating from 1944 to 1949: "Robinson," "Aspects of Robinson," "Robinson at Home," and "Relating to Robinson." All but the last were published in *The New Yorker*, and it is from this quartet that Kees's fame, such as it is, continues to flow. This seems to me entirely just. In tracking Robinson, the poet shrugs off the indulgence, the trying out of wretched or rancorous attitudes, that smothered his earlier verse. Scholars have noted a Robinson both in Céline's "Journey to the End of the Night" and in Kafka's "Amerika," although both of those creations give off a distinct whiff of the reprobate, whereas Kees's man is nothing if not respectable. Nothing, of course, may be his finest role; he is the kind of fellow whom we scarcely notice until he has quit the premises, leaving only crumbs of his existence. "The dog stops barking after Robinson has gone," runs the opening hexameter of "Robinson," which proceeds to gather more evidence:

> The pages in the books are blank,
> The books that Robinson has read.
> That is his favorite chair,
> Or where the chair would be if Robinson were here.
>
> All day the phone rings. It could be Robinson
> Calling. It never rings when he is here.

The poem also mentions a first wife. I wonder whether Robinson married again, and whether his second wife, perhaps, took to drink like Mrs. Kees, and to seducing younger men; did the late Anne Bancroft read these poems in preparation for "The Graduate"?

As far as we can tell, Weldon Kees never left the shores of America. His poetry turns often toward Europe, and one can readily picture him in the footsteps of his expatriate idols, such as James, Fitzgerald, and Eliot. (He also revered Flaubert and latched instantly onto Chandler; whatever else you say of Kees, his taste was immaculate.) Like them, he grew resistant to a particular strain of American hopefulness. Here is Emerson, in an essay called "Illusions": "In the life of the dreariest alderman, fancy enters into all details, and colors them with rosy hue. He imitates the air and actions of people whom he admires, and is raised in his own eyes." That is the antithesis of Robinson, whose fancies pull him down, and for whom rosiness is found in a whiskey sour. The unhappy are most hard to tolerate when they force their discontent upon the rest of us, but Kees was too courteous for that; he simply lacked the Emersonian gift of moral levitation—everything that tells the Robinsons of this world to snap out of it, embrace their wives, say a prayer, and check their stock prices. We should not be misled, by the enigma of his vanishing, into overrating Kees, either as a man or as an artist; he was a major minor poet, yet that very stature, together with his ceaseless lusting to be other or better than he was, makes him a representative figure of his time. Here is how he closed a tribute to the painter Arshile Gorky, in 1950:

> Throughout his career, terminated by the artist's suicide in 1947, Gorky seemed more than ordinarily marked by a struggle to get at his own identity. . . . Perhaps Gorky, now that he is safely dead, will receive the recognition denied him when he was in a position to care.

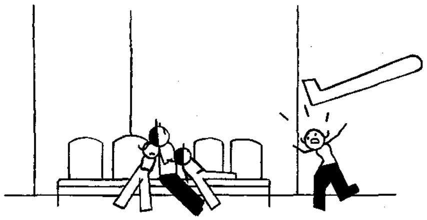
The fellow-feeling here is too bitter for comfort, and the sole alleviation we can offer, fifty years since Kees made his exit, is to recognize the quality of his own struggle. It was fitful but never fraudulent; it bore the imprint, in the verse, of a skill and patience that he was seldom able to wield in his private distress; and, toward the end, it glimmered with enticing rumors of tranquillity. Who knows, if Kees had survived—or if he still survives, at a hale ninety-one—where this questing son of Beatrice, Nebraska, might have found new life:

> Yet in spite of loss and guilt
> And hurricanes of time, it might be built:
>
> A refuge, permanent, with trees that shade
> When all the other cities die and fade. ♦

BRIEFLY NOTED

The Hummingbird's Daughter, *by Luis Alberto Urrea (Little, Brown; $24.95).* Twenty years in the making, Urrea's epic novel recounts the true story of his great-aunt Teresita. In 1873, amid the political turbulence of General Porfirio Díaz's Mexican republic, Teresita is born to a fourteen-year-old Indian girl, "mounted and forgotten" by her white master. Don Tomàs Urrea later takes his illegitimate daughter into his home, where she learns to bathe every week and read "Las Hermanas Brontë." But Teresita also continues a folk education as a *curandera,* discovering healing powers and a mystical relationship with God. Indian pilgrims swarm to the Urrea ranch, where "St. Teresita," a mestiza Joan of Arc, kindles in them a powerful faith in God and a perilous hunger for revolution. The novel brings to life not only the deeply pious figure whom Díaz himself dubbed "the Most Dangerous Girl in Mexico" but also the blood-soaked landscape of pre-revolutionary Mexico.

One Shot, *by Lee Child (Delacorte; $25).* Child's new novel begins when a sniper methodically kills five office workers with six quick shots and then disappears. But in a Child thriller the expectations aroused by one page are sure to be dashed on the next; unravelling and re-tangling violent narratives is the writer's specialty. This is the ninth of his books to feature the drifter-investigator Jack Reacher—a hybrid of John D. MacDonald's Travis McGee and Mickey Spillane's Mike Hammer—and it certainly ranks in the first tier of the series. There is considerable mayhem, lovingly described ("A long time ago the bones in his spine had been methodically cracked with an engineer's ball-peen hammer"), and there's a good cast, including suspicious law-enforcement personnel and an elderly Russian who is missing most of his fingers. Before it's all, vividly, over, one feels confident that Reacher—smart, rootless, and brave—will not only get his man but make him suffer.



Mozart in the Jungle, *by Blair Tindall (Atlantic Monthly; $24).* For the author, an oboist and journalist, a certain Upper West Side apartment building, long popular with musicians, is a metaphor for classical music in America today: a Beaux-Arts façade masking an increasingly decrepit infrastructure. Tindall's book, her first, is hardly free of false notes. Paragraphs full of dire predictions and alarming statistics jibe a little too conveniently with her tales of professional disappointment and sexual promiscuity. As Tindall sleeps her way to the bottom, we learn more than we probably need to about the sex lives of some more or less prominent American musicians. But Tindall's central complaint—that the classical-music world has created a crisis by training too many musicians and supporting a culture of exorbitant pay for a few fortunate stars—is difficult to refute.

The Age of Conversation, *by Benedetta Craveri, translated from the Italian by Teresa Waugh (N.Y.R.B.; $30).* Craveri argues that when, in the sixteen-twenties, the Marquise de Rambouillet offered her home as a place for the French nobility to gather she was unwittingly fermenting a revolution. The next century and a half constituted the golden age of conversation, which allowed the aristocracy to establish a new order, based not on the strictures of church or crown but on manners. Craveri's narrative paints a series of brilliant portraits of those (mostly women) who presided over the new sphere. Her thesis that the politesse of the nobility was the foundation of *égalité* is subtly provocative, but it ignores the legions who were excluded from the salons, and who took up arms against the bantering classes. For Craveri, the aristocracy is elegant, witty, and honorable to the end, when salons were held in prison as the conversationalists awaited the guillotine.

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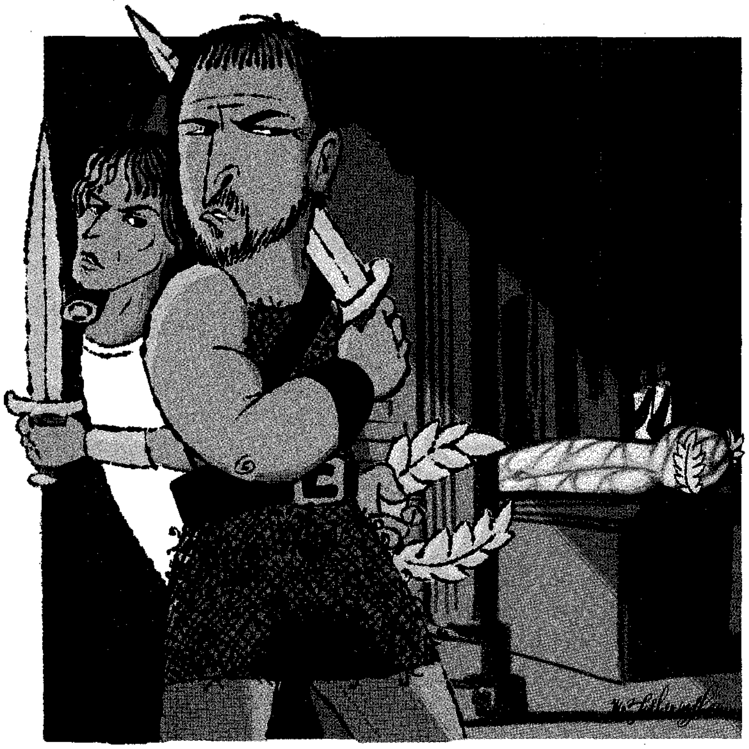
ON TELEVISION

WHEN IN ROME

ABC revisits ancient history.

BY NANCY FRANKLIN

Juno's bustin' out all over, what with two series set in Rome at the end of Caesar's reign coming to television within a few months of each other: HBO's "Rome" begins in September, and ABC's "Empire" starts this Tuesday and runs every week through the end of July. HBO's series, which opens in 52 B.C., consists of twelve episodes and will be renewed if it takes hold with viewers; "Empire," which starts in 44 B.C., on the day of Caesar's assassination, is a miniseries, or, as the networks have taken to calling these things, perhaps in an attempt to make them sound more special, a "limited series." (This slightly pretentious wording cuts both ways, though; it can bring out the Edna May Oliver in a person, the sniffy voice that wants to say, whether such a dismissal is warranted or not, "Yes—limited *indeed*.") Between the late seventies, when the BBC series "I, Claudius" became a hit on public television (something that couldn't happen in today's culturally fearful climate), and 2000, when "Gladiator" killed at the box office and at the Academy Awards, there wasn't much sword-and-sandal action. But in the last few years we've seen "Troy" and "Alexander" in movie theatres and the two-part series "Caesar" on TV, and now these two—both of which were filmed in Rome, cost an enormous amount of money (at least a hundred million dollars for "Rome," about thirty million for "Empire"), had serious production troubles, and maintain the time-honored tradition of pretending that everyone in ancient Rome spoke with a British accent.



Friends, Romans, countrymen: two guys out to save the Republic.

For some years now, I have had to endure a forced, contractual separation from the discriminating TV viewer's favorite phrase: "You couldn't *pay* me to watch that." But that's how I feel about miniseries; to me, they are beach reading without the beach, airport reading with the airport. They last just the wrong amount of time—they don't have the compressed energy of a short story, and they're not expansive and open-ended, like a regular series or a good novel. A miniseries is like an infomercial—by the time you decide whether you want to buy it, you've logged too many hours in front of the TV. Also, though I understand the networks' desire to claw their way back to the ratings mountaintop, I resist the promotion of miniseries as "events"; you know ahead of time that the Olympics, the turn of the millennium, and an unscripted press conference by President Bush are events, but a TV show can become an event only after it is broadcast. Viewers tell the networks what was an event, not the other way around.

Still, "Empire" has as two of its executive producers Craig Zadan and Neil Meron, who have an intelligent and appreciative but not earnest approach to pop culture and its history. They've made TV versions of the musicals "Annie" and "The Music Man" and the feature film of "Chicago," as well as TV movies of the lives of Lucille Ball, the Beach Boys, and, memorably, Judy Garland. (Zadan and Meron also produced the not at all bad 2003 TV movie about the Reagans, which right-wing politicos intimidated CBS into not running.) Their work is almost always worth a look.

"Empire" was created by Thomas Wheeler (who is also an executive producer), and it is a sumptuous production, featuring a cast that never disappoints. A couple of the actors are familiar—Fiona Shaw, in particular, who was already well known for her theatre work before becoming internationally famous in the "Harry Potter" movies—but most of them are refreshingly new, or newish, to American audiences. And there is a nice balance of action, intrigue, and explanation. (Despite the occasional head impaled on a stake and some orgiastic activity—in which, however, you can't "see anything"—the series is appropriate for teen-agers; it would make fine summer reading, as it were, for high-school students, whom it may inspire to delve further into ancient history.) It begins shortly before Caesar (Colm Feore) is murdered, as two senators, the schemer Cassius (Michael Maloney) and the conflicted Brutus (James Frain), discuss Caesar's intentions, and try to convince the general Marc Antony (Vincent Regan) that his aim is to overthrow the Republic. Rome itself is at stake—whatever happens after the senators converge on Caesar and stab him to death, "all the world hinges on the outcome," as we are told in a voice-over by the vestal virgin

Camane (Emily Blunt), at the end of the first episode. As Caesar is dying, only one man hears his final wish, which is that his grandnephew Octavius (Santiago Cabrera), an eighteen-year-old of no distinction, inherit his position and become the ruler of Rome. That man is Tyrannus—a fictional gladiator, and the linchpin of "Empire." "He will save the dream of Rome," Caesar says to him of Octavius. "Teach him how to fight, my friend. Teach him how to rule." Played by Jonathan Cake, Tyrannus is one of nature's noblemen—a swarthy, prognathous hunk of man with unerring instincts for doing the right thing. And he's a heck of a fighter, as we see throughout the series; there's a gratifyingly large amount of clanging, clashing metal in "Empire." In many ways, the series can be considered an adventure story or a buddy picture: as Tyrannus and Octavius go about the countryside, trying to marshal legions of soldiers and to stay alive, one teaches the other how to be a leader of men.

If you sense that there are elisions in the story, it's because the script was cut from eight episodes to six before filming, when the budget got out of hand. ("Empire" had other bad luck, too; after primary shooting was done, the set was destroyed by a fire.) The flow of the series isn't all you would wish it to be, but there are wonderful moments: Marc Antony talking baby talk to his dogs; the strained dance of détente between him and his wife, Fulvia (Shaw); Octavius—the future emperor Augustus—testily saying, like a modern New Yorker, "What are you looking at?" to someone who may have guessed his identity when he's trying to disguise himself; the murderous twinkle that lights up Cassius's face as he tries to thwart Octavius's progress. And there's a beauty to the cinematography which you don't often see on network TV, and which can make you forgive the conventional score and most of the clunky moments. All in all, "Empire" is a series maximus.

A lot of people hate the media, it is said; unfortunately, too few of those people are themselves in the media, which, once in a while, could benefit from some purifying self-flagellation. The coverage of the doings of Jennifer Wilbanks, the "runaway bride," back in April, and the entire hour of prime-time TV that NBC devoted to following up on the story last week—"A Katie Couric Special"—would have been a good opportunity. The absurdity of the blanket coverage of Wilbanks's disappearance from an Atlanta suburb, four days before her wedding, and the revelation, a few days later, that she had bolted and not been kidnapped or killed—had not, that is to say, become the next Laci Peterson—has been well catalogued, and yet somehow it's possible to feel stunned that any news organization would still be pursuing her two months later. Of course, viewers were naturally interested in the story of a mysterious disappearance, but, given that it was the TV-news establishment that had forced the story on us for days on end, Couric was disingenuous, at the very least, when she described the search for Wilbanks as "a national obsession" that had "gripped the nation."

Toward the end of the show, Couric told viewers that Wilbanks was receiving inpatient treatment at a psychiatric facility and that the interview had taken place while she was out on a weekend pass. It is impossible to understand how any responsible adult—and everyone at NBC News is presumably one of those—could have brought himself to intrude on Wilbanks's life in this way at this time, even if she was willing. But, once Wilbanks was actually sitting across from her, why didn't Couric ask her about the deal she had just made to sell her life story for half a million dollars, or raise her eyebrows when Wilbanks said that, at the age of thirty-two, she still kissed her father on the lips, or when she answered a question about what her dreams for her life were by describing what her mother's dreams for her were? As psychiatrists say, *Oy!* Couric prompted Wilbanks to keep talking about the bottle of pills she said she had been thinking of taking, but didn't ask what they were or where she got them. What we did find out was what china, glassware, and silver Wilbanks had registered for, as Couric listed them in voice-over while the camera helpfully showed examples of each pattern. In summing up, Couric said that Wilbanks hopes that when people watch the interview and "learn her full story they will come to see her as she sees herself—as a real person with real problems, not as a headline." What Wilbanks should really be hoping for is that one day very soon the networks will stop calling, and that people won't see her at all. ♦

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THE THEATRE

ON YOUR TOES

"Billy Elliot" leaps from screen to stage.

BY JOHN LAHR

Bannered across the poster for London's new hit musical "Billy Elliot" (at the Victoria Palace)—a collaboration between two of the country's mightiest showmen, the director Stephen Daldry and the composer Sir Elton John—is an unbuttoned quotation from the usually buttoned-down British broadsheet the *Daily Telegraph.* "The greatest British musical I have ever seen," it says. What, I wonder, are the other great British musicals? "Salad Days"? "The Boy Friend"? "Cats"? The British love musicals; they just don't do them very well. The problem, it seems to me, is spiritual. The jazz of American optimism, which lends elation and energy to the form, is somehow alien to the ironic British spirit. At its buoyant core, the American musical is the expression of a land of plenty. England, on the other hand, is a land of scarcity—the Land of No, as a friend of mine calls it.

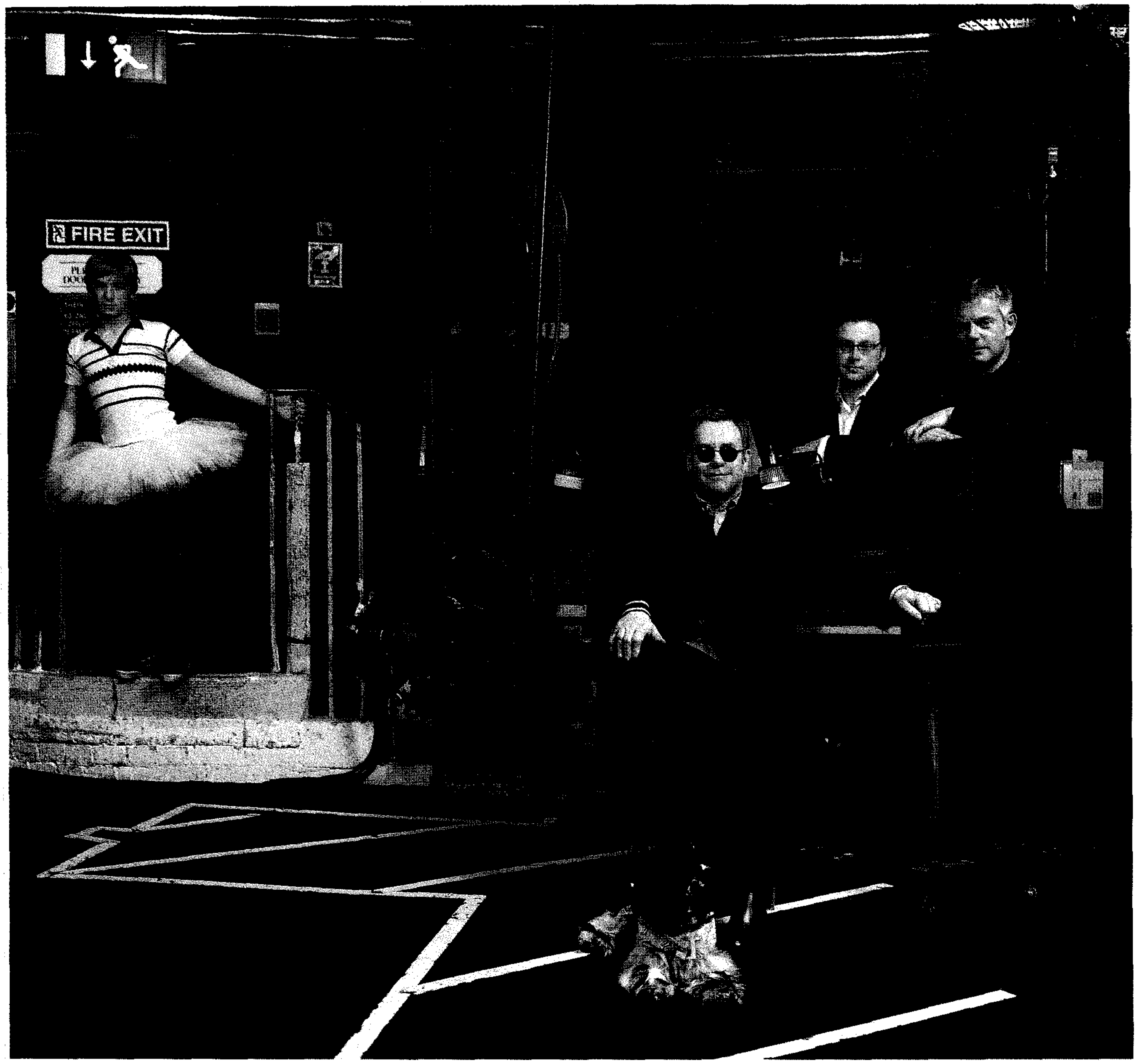
"Billy Elliot" is fascinating because it situates itself precisely on the cultural fault line between the two traits. The scarcity depicted here is the 1984 miners' strike—a brutal yearlong losing battle that the miners of Yorkshire waged against Margaret Thatcher and the Tories, who felt that the pits weren't economically viable, and were determined to break up the all-powerful miners' union. Abundance appears in the form of the eleven-year-old Billy, who is as impoverished as the next striking miner's child but who turns out to be rich in talent. "All out together / All out as one," the miners sing as they are called out on strike, but Billy's gift sets him apart from his embattled community and, for a while, from himself. Billy wants to dance, not demonstrate. He starts off as a nonentity and ends up, in our eyes at least, a star. (The musical might as well be called "Coal Diggers of 1984.")

Both the film version, which was nominated for three Academy Awards in 2001, and the stage version of "Billy Elliot" have touched people. When a story gets at something elemental in the dream life of its audience—here it's the longing to discover your desire and to seize your destiny—narrative vulgarities are often overlooked. This, it seems to me, explains how a show with a mawkish, melodramatic book, and without a single memorable melody or lyric, could have worked its way so deeply into the public imagination. The team that made the movie also made the musical, and therein lies the problem: it's a first for both Daldry and his screenwriter, Lee Hall, who wrote the book and the lyrics for the show. Ordinarily, putting a musical into the hands of novices would be a recipe for disaster; in this case, it's a recipe for a muddle masquerading as a major event. The show has every right to call itself a commercial hit, but no right, I think, to call itself excellent.

"Billy Elliot" begins with postwar footage of a speaker at an annual coal miners' gala invoking "this new adventure" of nationalization and "the great experiment of socialism." The curtain rises forty years later as that socialist dream is turning to disappointment. Onstage, the strikers, who are black-and-white caricatures of commitment, seem literally to emerge out of the documentary, weighed down by historical fact and coated in the impasto of slogans. By contrast, both physically and psychologically Billy wants to take flight. The musical never properly melds the two dimensions of air and earth, of Billy and the miners. By nature, the musical genre deals with fantasy, not fact; it is at its most political when it delivers pleasure, not dogmatic persiflage. Hall doesn't seem to understand this, and his prolix, repetitive book quickly loses its way. When the miners are the issue—and their story eats up a fair portion of the saga—the musical stalls; the proletariat here really *are* lumpen. When Billy dances, however, everything comes alive.

On the night that I saw the show, Billy was performed by the hardworking James Lomas (he alternates in the role with Liam Mower and George Maguire), a confident and handsome teen-ager who is well able to convey Billy's sensitive soul, trapped in a stultifying macho world. Dance allows Billy both to express that sensitivity and to act out a rage that he lacks the words to formulate. Billy, as the show takes pains to emphasize, is not liberating his inner poofter through dance. The musical, nonetheless, does indulge in a little homophobic fun at the expense of Billy's gormless cross-dressing sidekick, Michael (Ashley Lloyd, in the performance I saw), who, at the boys' Saturday boxing class, would rather punch the instructor in the balls than lay a glove on Billy. The two boys' number, "Expressing Yourself," in which dresses on hangers dance with them, is a charming idea, but the visual invention never quite pays off. When Billy is doing his twists and twirls, his youthful entrechats and jetés, the immanence of the extraordinary is credible. When he tap-dances, it isn't; Savion Glover he ain't. Still, Billy's daring is best demonstrated by dance, not by plot. In a balletic vision of what he might be, Billy swoops and swings high above his imagined older self (Isaac James), a thrilling moment that underscores both the character's transcendence and the performer's physical bravery.

Although most of the subsidiary characters here are rudimentarily sketched, Billy's dyspeptic Gran (the excellent Ann Emery) plants the seeds of his moral courage in "We'd Go Dancing," a song about her thirty-three years of unhappy marriage, which earns the first round of applause from the audience. "If I'd only known then what I know now / I'd've given them all the finger," she sings. But the person who really coaxes Billy to find himself is the no-nonsense dance instructor Mrs. Wilkinson (Haydn Gwynne), whose ballet class follows boxing at the local hall. Billy is drawn to her because she sees his promise; we are drawn to her because she's one of the few characters with a wash of personality. Gwynne establishes a real sardonic rapport with the audience as well as with Billy. With a bevy of pudgy would-be ballerinas as her comic chorus girls, she puts over with humorous swagger the sour anthem "Shine," a third-generation Xerox of



James Lomas as Billy, with Sir Elton John, Lee Hall, and Stephen Daldry, the show's creators. Photograph by Ralph Mecke.

Chicago's "Razzle Dazzle." "It doesn't matter if you're unemployed / Only partially humanoid," Mrs. Wilkinson jokes. Typical of the show's sloppiness, the rhyme is wrong both for the character and for the era.

Most of the heavy lifting in "Billy Elliot" is left to Daldry, who has a flair for the spectacular. Some of his stage pictures are splendid: Billy soaring through beams of light; Billy throwing himself furiously against the Plexiglas shields of massed policemen, who beat a fierce tattoo with their truncheons; and, at the finale, the defeated miners returning to work and sinking belowground as Billy is poised to rise. These images say more than the prose ever does. But, out of a kind of narrative desperation, Daldry is forced to borrow from the tattered grab bag of avant-garde tricks: behemoth puppets, masks on the backs of heads—any surprise to cover up the lacklustre book and music. And, after Billy's sensational explosion at the police, Daldry can't properly clinch the moment. Billy lies back on the ground, then simply gets up and walks offstage: end of Act I. Fatigue seems to have blinkered Daldry's critical ability. At the end of the show, just before Billy sets off for ballet school and his future, Daldry allows him to read a letter to his dead mother. "I'll always be myself, Mammy," Billy says. "And I will always be true. Love you forever." Billy exits with a tear in his eye and a bag in his hand—a bag, I guess, full of bathos.

When the most delightful part of a show is the curtain call—a ten-minute knees-up, with the entire cast, including the miners, now thankfully liberated from their earnestness, dressed in tutus—you know you're in trouble. The manipulative high jinks more or less declare the show's thematic bankruptcy. "Billy Elliot" may look nostalgically toward Yorkshire, but its heart is planted firmly in Fort Knox. Whereas the film's finale flashed forward to show a mature Billy performing "Swan Lake," the musical forgoes displays of prowess for pandering; it does get the audience high, but with camp, not content. ♦

THE CURRENT CINEMA

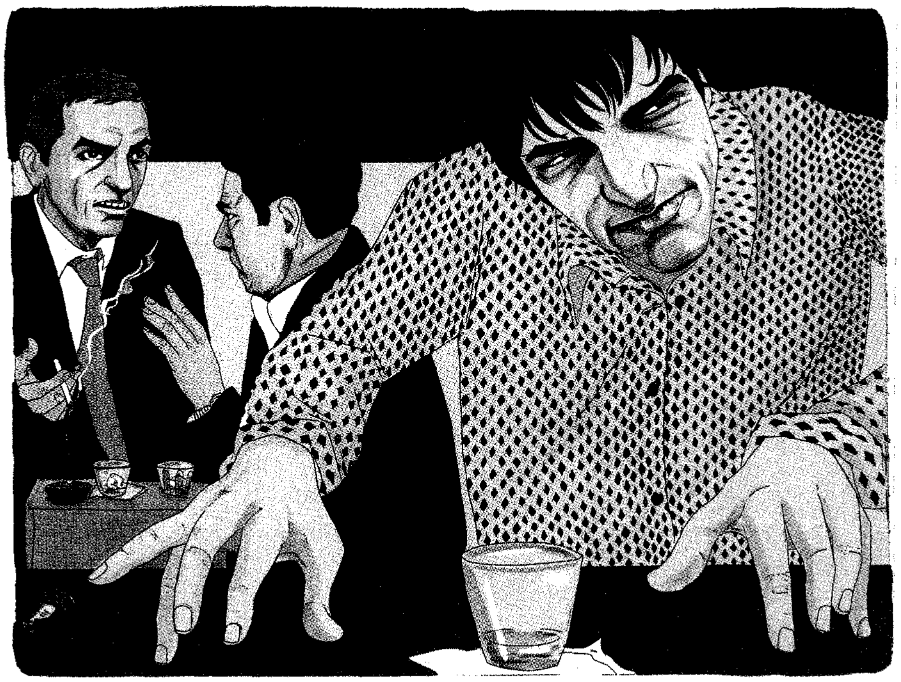
THEY LIVE BY NIGHT

"The Beat That My Heart Skipped" and "Elevator to the Gallows."

BY DAVID DENBY

Thomas Seyr (Romain Duris), the jumpy young hero of "The Beat That My Heart Skipped," is both an artist and a thug. Tom's late mother was a famous concert pianist; he inherited her skills and her love of music, but, after she died, he let the music go and fell under the influence of his slumlord father (Niels Arestrup), a baleful old reprobate whom Tom nevertheless loves very much. Does the story sound familiar? This French movie, set in Paris and directed by Jacques Audiard, is a remake of a notorious American film, James Toback's "Fingers," from 1978, in which Harvey Keitel starred as a Mafia enforcer who loved to play Bach. The plot of "Fingers" was dream-spun and improbable, a young intellectual's projection of existential angst. Audiard and the screenwriter Tonino Benacquista have retained Toback's mood of overstrained anxiety, but they've dropped most of the flamboyant violence and lurid fantasy, omitting any conceivable equivalent to Toback's Mad Moment—the adoring scenes with Jim Brown as master of sex and brutality, a black superstud lording it over white girls.

Balzacian realism now replaces anguished metaphysics: this hero is not a mafioso but, more banally, a kind of real-estate lowlife—he and his friends chase poor tenants out of slum buildings, buy up the buildings, and then sell them at a profit. This sordid trade requires regular doses of intimidation (depositing rats in hallways, smashing windows), which Tom administers angrily, spasmodically, with the exasperation of a man who knows he's betraying himself. Thin-skinned and volatile, he tears around town drumming his fingers on bar counters and car dashboards as he listens to pop music on his headphones. When he meets his mother's old concert promoter, who promises him an audition, he throws himself back into classical music after years of neglect. Split down the middle between mother and father, music and crime, exhilaration and guilt, Tom is a tormented mess. But Audiard, by conceiving the material realistically, brings the character much closer to us: Tom's funk could be an extravagant version of the breach in anyone's life between a job he hates and the glory he craves. What makes Tom unusual, of course, is that, unlike most frustrated young male dreamers, he longs not for anarchic liberty but for order and art.



Romain Duris plays a real-estate lowlife who wants to become a concert pianist.

Jacques Audiard likes edgy stories—his previous movie, "Read My Lips" (2001), tracked the unstable relationship between a surly ex-con and a genteel secretary—and he tells them in a fast, seemingly casual style. Much of "The Beat That My Heart Skipped" was shot at night, in long takes, and with shadowy available light. Audiard and his cinematographer, Stéphane Fontaine, rush through Paris in pursuit of Romain Duris's Tom, crowding behind him as he hustles in and out of buildings and clubs, and peering over his shoulder as he sits shirtless at the piano. We're caught inside Tom's skin—not always a comfortable place to be, since he can be abrupt and dislikable. In general, Audiard lets the actors run free. They talk out of the corners of their brains, rapidly, profanely, chewing over their corrupt deals and sexual exploits, and, even if we can't see or hear everything, we get the essence of the moment, and the adrenaline-high excitement of it, too. Audiard's work is tense, vivid, and alert, and he's got the right actor as Tom, an irresistibly attractive guy who's pushing thirty yet has no more control over his impulses than a chaotic boy.

Duris is small but well knit, with dark hair and eyes and a much photographed lean torso. Tom does dirty chores for his failing father, even beating up people and collecting money, but he doesn't give much to anyone else. How could he? He can't give much to himself. He's balled up in frustration and disappointment, and Duris, in a black leather jacket, makes him an anxious little hot shot with a twitchy, feral snarl that comes close to the reflexive grimace of the dangerous young Jean-Louis Trintignant. Tom's turn toward music is, of course, an attempt at redemption—or, at least, maturity. Will he make it? Will he *play*? He's the kind of troubled character we may care for more than we do for someone in better shape, perhaps because he still has enormous promise and he feels everything that happens to him—his thin skin is his humanity. In his moments with his father, Tom is pulled between affection and disgust; the larcenous old man, with his big stomach and lank hair and sensual enjoyment of food and sex, is the kind of seductively terrible parent one has trouble breaking away from, the parent whose love is like a padlock.

Tom begins to free himself, yet the picture doesn't collapse into a stuffy display of virtue; it remains exciting—the classical music that could save Tom is just as dangerous for him as his life of intimidation and fraud. He hooks up with a young Vietnamese virtuoso, Miao-Lin (Linh-Dan Pham), who's trying to make a career in Paris and needs a job. He goes to her house every day for lessons—a novel excursion into sunlit hours—and the scenes of musical pedagogy that follow are both intense and funny. Miao-Lin is slender and beautiful, with a combination of gentle demeanor and ferocious discipline that is entirely unreachable for a nerve-jangled Westerner like Tom. For him, each attempt at a Bach toccata, taken at breakneck tempo, is like a tightrope dash across a vast chasm—the perils of failure are huge. As he struggles to get the notes and the rhythms back into his fingers, and shouts in despair when he can't, his teacher looks at him in wonder and dismay, and then with increasing affection. Audiard could have made the romantic side of the movie more explicit, but reticence is part of his cool. In "Read My Lips," the secretary and the ex-con barely speak to each other—the secretary is almost deaf. In this movie, Miao-Lin doesn't know a word of French, and she and Tom have to communicate through music and gesture. The charged, event-filled silence brings the man and woman closer.

Fighting the keyboard, Tom at first plays ineptly or badly (there's plenty of music, performed on the soundtrack by Duris's older sister, Caroline Duris). Miao-Lin soothes him into allowing the music to flow more evenly, but Tom can't quite put his seedy friends and his disreputable father, and the violence they are part of, out of his life. The allure of violence is something that moviegoers know a lot about, but the allure of art is Audiard's personal triumph; it's the moral dimension that separates him from Toback, who appeared to be irretrievably enthralled by mayhem. In this movie, music is a kind of violence, too, but only as a spiritual struggle that draws on both love and rage.

The nighttime street scenes in "The Beat That My Heart Skipped" have a likely precursor in Louis Malle's elegant first feature, "Elevator to the Gallows," in which Jeanne Moreau, wandering the Paris boulevards in search of her lover, passes in and out of shadows. At the time (1957), beautiful actresses were normally photographed in full light and, if possible, when sitting, reclining, or standing still. The half-light playing on Moreau's face as she walked became something of a cinematographic *scandale*—a shift away from conventional craftsmanship and toward expressive imperfections. "Elevator to the Gallows," which is being given a theatrical run (at the Sunshine) in conjunction with a Malle retrospective at the Walter Reade Theatre (from June 24th to July 19th), is a proto-New Wave movie, very much a work of the fifties but one that, in retrospect, appears to be pointing toward a liberated future.

The fifties elements can be seen in the formal attire worn by the principals (Moreau is in evening clothes and heels and a straight-from-the-beauty-parlor do) and in the symmetries of the story, which yield a facile, sub-Hitchcockian irony. Moreau's lover is a former war hero, played by Maurice Ronet, who works for her scoundrel of a husband, an international arms profiteer. Ronet kills the husband in his office but gets stuck in the elevator as he makes his escape from the building (the power has been turned off), leaving Moreau to think that he has run off with someone else. Meanwhile, a teen-age boy and his girlfriend steal Ronet's car and, using his name, go on an odd, murderous spree in the suburbs. Will Moreau and Ronet ever get together? A dazzlingly passionate closeup of Moreau at the very beginning of the movie suggests the depths of her longing. This is a movie built around a missed connection, and Moreau's nocturnal wanderings are made unbearably poignant by an exquisite Miles Davis jazz score that became famous in its own right (and is still available on Verve). Ronet's attempts to climb out of the elevator, meticulously staged and photographed, suggest a conscious homage to "A Man Escaped," the Robert Bresson masterpiece on which Malle had served as an assistant director the year before. But the street scenes, the bizarre, anomalous adventures that Moreau has on her nighttime quest, the anarchic kids who just pick up and go—all this looks forward to the New Wave, and to such spontaneous urban prowls as "The Beat That My Heart Skipped." Audiard's movie may feature Bach rather than Miles Davis, but it's jazzy in spirit, and Malle probably would have loved it. ♦

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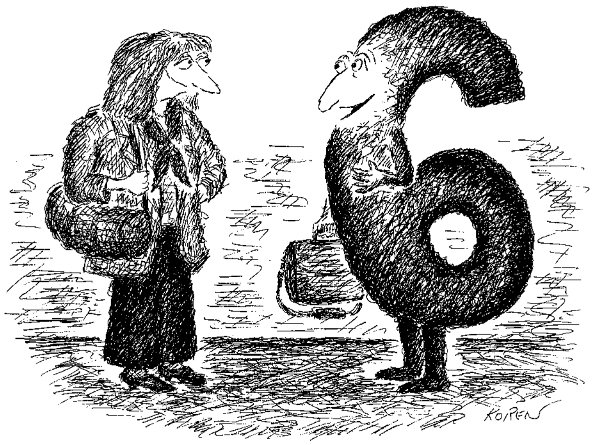
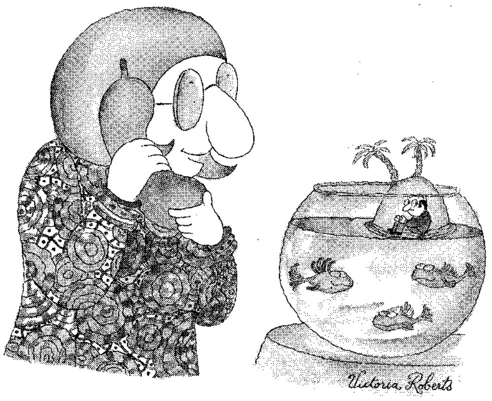
CARTOON CAPTION CONTEST

Each week, we provide a cartoon in need of a caption. You, the reader, submit a caption, we choose three finalists, and you vote for your favorite. Caption submissions for this week's cartoon, by Danny Shanahan, must be received by Sunday, July 3rd. Finalists in the June 13th & 20th contest appear below; go online to vote. We will announce the winner, along with the finalists in this week's contest, in the July 25th issue. The winner will be given a signed print of the cartoon. Any U.S. resident age eighteen or over can enter or vote. To do so, and to read the complete rules, visit www.newyorker.com/captioncontest.

WINNING CAPTION



"It's me, '9,' from yoga class."
Robert Cafrelli, Aliquippa, Pa.



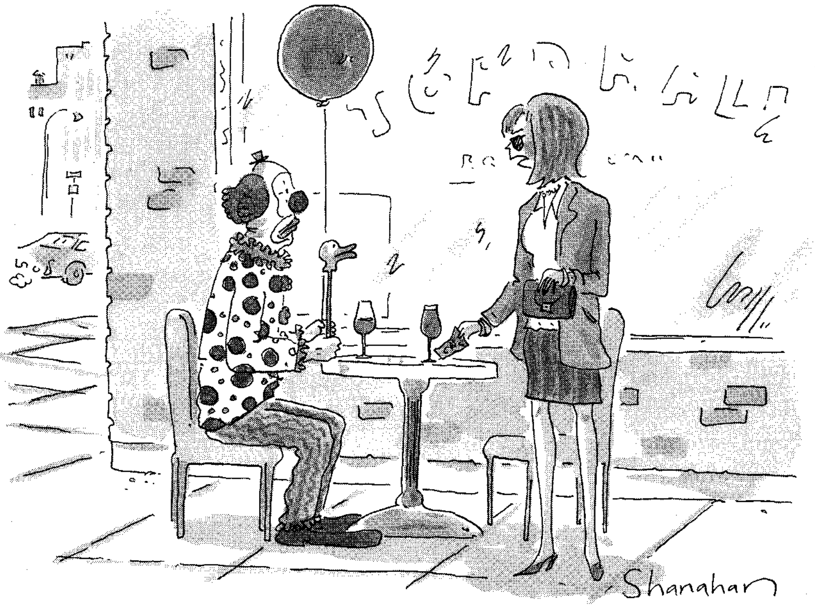
THE FINALISTS

"You wouldn't believe it! I met a man at the pet store."
Peter Kohut, Bound Brook, N.J.

"We decided on separate vacations this year."
Ronald Katz, Potomac, Md.

"He's the cutest little thing, and when you get tired of him you just flush him down the toilet."
Jan Richardson, Ridgeland, Miss.

THIS WEEK'S CONTEST



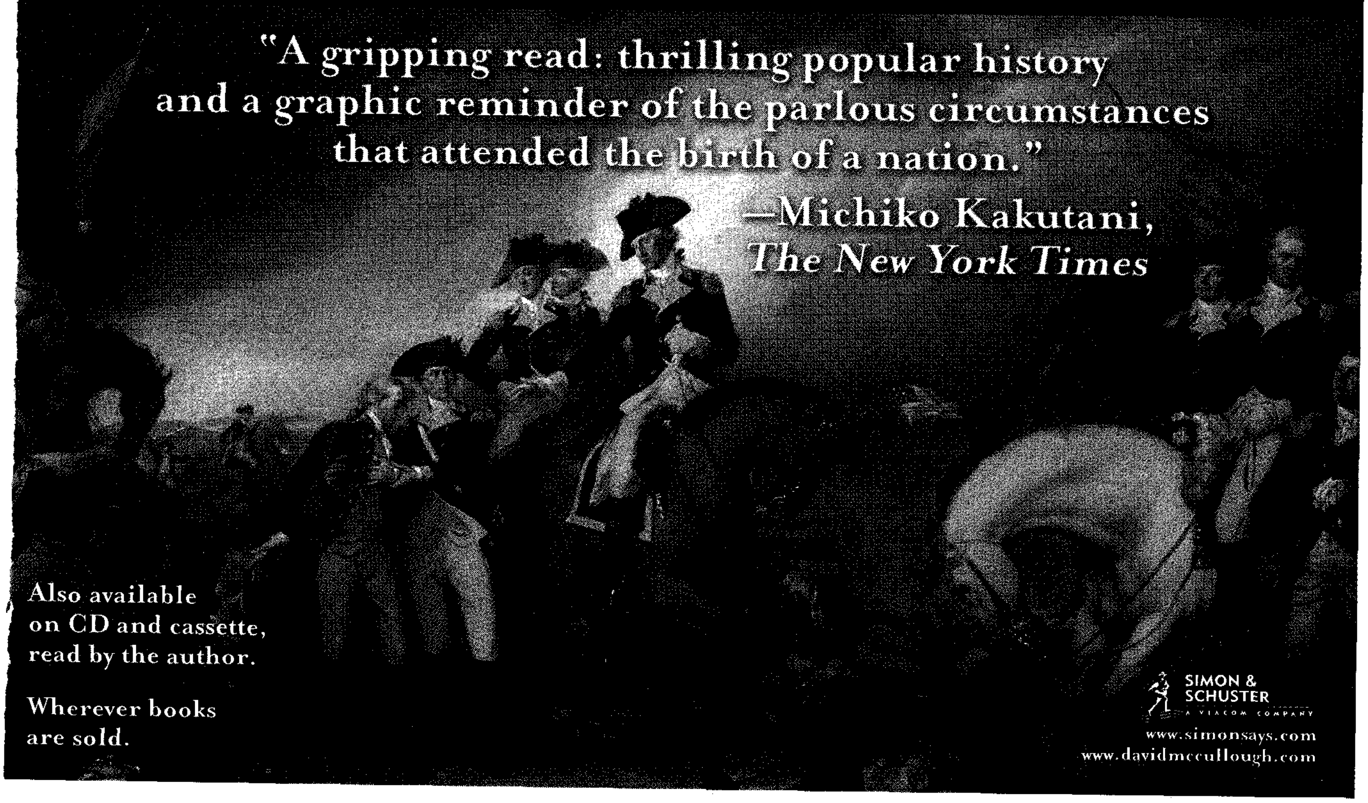
" ____ "

THIS JULY 4TH, RELIVE THE REVOLUTION.

DAVID McCULLOUGH

WINNER OF THE PULITZER PRIZE

1776



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